DEDICATED

to the future of

a people in transition

the people of India

and principally the peasants of India

but, most of all,

her tribal peoples.

FOREWORD

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For me the life of every person is interesting. However monotonous or humdrum the outer appearances, below its surface each life has the makings of a Greek drama, with its inevitabilities of outer and inner forces leading to climaxes. A life like that of Nagin Parekh reaches the proportions of the great Greek tragedies in the juxtaposition of a striving figure with fate in the two shapes of massive social and political institutions, and the more personal encounters. The life as presented here deals mainly with the first shape of the fate and has become a fascinating study of failure in social planning.

Unfortunately the story is revealed in scraps and one gathers impressions rather than facts. Taking into account the time, the proportions and the quality of the social experiment carried out at Koraput, students of sociology and workers in social fields need nothing less than a clear and detailed account, in chronological order, of the whole endeavour. This would have to cover the social situation, the actors and their acts. A failure recorded in such a way can be turned into a means for future success. Would it be possible to do that, or will such a venture again evoke insurmountable difficulties in the form of institutionalized antagonism?

The three main interacting groups in this story were the tribal villagers, the Sarva Seva Sangh, with the Orissa State and Central Governments. Actually the two Governments did not work as one group but as two, with separate interests and authorities. The interaction of the two Governments with each other is an important factor in the development of the Koraput situation.

The coming together of the three groups was due to a phenomenon which, in its combination of uniqueness and culturally-patterned behaviour, deserves a study of its own.

In this experiment two parties were initially involved: the slice of tribal society which was sought to be changed, and the agency, the Sarva Seva Sangh, which was striving to bring about the change. The two Governments with their power to finance, help or obstruct were part of the total experimental situation. This incident raises some of the most important problems of sociology. One would like to have a full description of the happenings from the beginning to the end, and of the condition today of those villages. Some of the important points on which analysis is needed deserve mention.

1. What was the nature of the change sought to be induced? How did it affect the old pattern of life? Besides the purely economic changes, what were the social concomitants?
2. Why was this change thought to be good? Were there other alternatives, or did the fact of *Gramdan* bar these?
3. What was the authority of those seeking change? Respect? Power to distribute money? Government backing? Legal sanctions?
4. What were the means used for change? Persuasion? Distribution of largess? Moral pressures? Educative communications?
5. What made the experiment a failure? Was it because an idea completely new and outside the culture-content was sought to be imposed from outside?
   Did it lead to the creation of new power-groups within the tribal community who played a political game in alliance with outside power-groups?
   Did the process take on the character of a struggle for power between two groups—the Sarvodaya people on the one hand, with the local Big Men and the State Government on the other?
6. The picture of an agency which is supposed to be private and independent but is semi-government in a double sense

is interesting. The Sarva Seva Sangh is a voluntary agency supported entirely by the idealistic wing of the Congress party. It is thus not an independent agency or a brotherhood like a religious order, though it takes up all the symbols of one. It is enmeshed in the power-politics within the Congress party.

Its prestige with the government makes it a semi-government agency with large funds at its disposal. These funds seem to be invested in complex undertakings for which the members of the agency are not equipped. It plays the incompatible roles of a selfless voluntary society, a semi-government agency of public welfare and a starter of economic enterprises—lending money, starting co-operatives—for which its members have no training.

7. The agency seems to be made up of people who are idealist workers committed to one task, with leaders who have larger, nation-wide interests of such a nature that they flit from enterprise to enterprise, from scheme to scheme and from State capitals to the nation's capital. What is the articulation of these two sets, and what is their function *vis-a-vis* the welfare schemes and the political party, both need to be clearly brought out through such a study.

8. What are the relationships of the Government and such autonomous groups? How much autonomy should such groups have? Is there a danger of their usurping government functions or by-passing laws and procedures in their zeal for cutting red tape? Would they in their turn be creating a government within a government?

9. It seems, as Mr. Wood has so tellingly brought out, that too much was sought to be changed—achieved—in too short a time. A time-schedule was introduced where none was needed. And that brings us back again to the conditions and rates of social change.

Central to all these questions is the role and the status of the actual worker. In this case, the man was a highly educated, analytically minded person, not averse to experiment and learn-

ing. In other cases the workers are less educated, less sensitive and often moral bigots. The personality of this worker—Nagin—brings the whole narration from a purely analytical study to the proportions of a Greek tragedy.

7 August 1964

PREFACE

Nagin Parekh was the scion of a Saurashtrian family, settled in Bombay. When he died, while at his work among the remoter people of Orissa, his family found that the tributes paid to him would seem to make him something of a national figure in modern India. They consequently determined that there would be something more worth while than the satisfaction of family pride in publishing a Memorial volume to commemorate Nagin's short life.

At first the material for this publication appeared to be little more than an assembly of the usual appreciations of an outstanding personality, more particularly in the sense of current Indian values. Nagin was a modern Gandhian; and, naturally, the tributes are mainly from Indians who regard this tradition as paramount in their country.

But it soon became clear from the collection of material which grew, in response to the family's request, that the book would have little meaning unless the complex circumstances in which Nagin's last years were spent, could be explained to readers who are unlikely to know anything about the transitional development of tribal people.

Annasaheb Sahasrabudhe was Nagin's chief in Orissa. He had already provided a warm, personal appreciation of his young, late colleague, in "Portrait of a Devotee." This paper, however, sets too many ideas flowing to satisfy the reader who has a parallel interest in this sort of development.

Annasaheb was therefore kind enough to write something more extensive and detailed about the work in which Nagin was engaged; but he never had time to do more than dictate a large quantity of material, which was translated from Marathi, and which could not be carefully scanned by the author in its final

English form. As such, this supplementary paper was rather more a source of data, and of very useful views, arising from the fresh facts; but it was not the kind of account which could easily be edited for publication.

The editor of the volume therefore undertook the rash attempt to write an introduction which should combine Annasaheb's material with his own extensive records of the Pilot Project's work. These records consist of correspondence and documents exchanged with the Koraput group between 1955 and 1961. The resultant explanatory material was intended to give a better background to Nagin's later life and work; and it therefore constitutes an editorial introduction (with a dual authorship) to this volume. Annasaheb's material occupies pride of place in this editorial; but the structure of the paper and many of the opinions as well as the facts which are expressed are the responsibility of the editor.

Perhaps it can be said that a mutual interest in development gets free play in this manner. Annasaheb Sahasrabudhe represents the older, idealistic, but experienced kind of successful development-work, of which the most distinguished exponent recognized in this century was Gandhiji. This style of development is known in India as "constructive work."

This editor has far less experience of rural development work than Annasaheb, and represents a different school of thought. He began by four years of living as a villager himself, for no other reason than to learn about the lives and work of the people. He became convinced of their great, unused capacities. It still seems to him that only they can work out their future for themselves. Far too much energy seems to be concentrated in a village on complex personal relationships. The purpose of this concentration looks as if it were now useless. The local, internal authority to which villagers still tend to cling can no longer yield the security of the past.

If this view be right, there is a vast fund of energy waiting to be diverted to the acquisition of fresh technical knowledge and skills. All agree that this is one principal purpose of rural develop-

ment. However, the very process of development must open up far wider fields of relationships for the villager. He cannot depend indefinitely on being pressed by an Extension service with new matter to learn. Eventually, he will have to assess his changing needs himself, and find the means of satisfying them, which only he can adapt locally. This is where Extension can be of permanent service to the Indian peasant. It is immaterial whether or not the peasant recently belonged to a tribal culture.

The villager will in future have to deal with many people whom he cannot know intimately. Most of his new relationships, certainly outside his village, will be on a functional level. For instance, the individual government official is always likely to be transferred, but his successor will carry on his function. The villager therefore has to learn how to communicate objectively what he needs, and how to understand the communications in response which tell him how to get it.

In other words, villagers must use their powers of observation and judgement more on things and ideas than on people. The people they will meet who can help them will have little time to cultivate their close acquaintance; their new relationships must be largely impersonal. Those with whom the new, productive relationships are to be formed are themselves using analytical reasoning increasingly to support the new techniques they can offer, and to help the villager to find alternatives. He must cultivate his own power of analysis afresh, instead of relying on new teaching as a fresh source of external authority.

This kind of guidance in new uses of the mind seems to the editor to be a major purpose of development for villagers. There is no other way in which they can replace the authority of past experience, which has become their routine, by their own search for new resources.

Internal authority will persist only in their discovery of a more objective knowledge of their own world, which is itself changing very rapidly. The new, external sources of ideas, knowledge and skills will then be subject to the choices made by village people, after they have tested the advice and techniques in their own

environment.

On the part of the village-people, the detachment from their old systems of authority is unlikely to be achieved within less than two or three generations. During that period, every development worker will need to be in thorough sympathy with the situation which forces a poor villager to recognise (or at least pay lip-service to) the old dominations to which he has been accustomed for centuries.

Must further relationships of this outworn order continue to be cultivated? It looks as if Nagin's methods were a sound preparation for the slow changes in human relationships within the villages which have just been outlined. Nagin and his group seem, however, barely to have reached the stage where impersonal teaching of new techniques could help in fresh thinking; and so we still have no proof of its efficacy with tribal folk in the process of settlement as the New Peasantry.

It is probably no more than a pious hope that the collection of writings in this volume may secure a wider audience, including many who have only the vaguest ideas about development in India, but who are conscious of the need of such transitional processes all over today's unequal world. It is of even more remote possibility that the experiences which are recorded in the following pages will be studied by the politicians and officials in charge of rural development. Least likely of all is it that suitable action to improve the methods of Extension service in similar situations will be taken by those in power.

Nevertheless, this memorial to Nagin is being published in the hope that its records *may* have some influence. Editorially it may be remarked that Nagin had the same ideas as were expressed in XIVth century Britain by the author of *Gawain and the Green Knight*.—"What more can a man do but try?"

July, 1964.
January, 1965.

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PART 2: APPRECIATIONS OF NAGIN

Few of the writers gave titles. To the editor's attempt to condense their strongest impressions of what we have lost in Nagin, other points are made, as follows.

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A paged list of Contents seems unsuitable for this assembly of papers. Only two of them are complete for publication. All the rest are drastically edited in order to give an impression of the growth in Nagin's grasp of the problems both as they existed previously and as the progress of development—or its unsuccessful aims—created fresh ones.

All the material is arranged in order of date. Most of it is a running commentary on increasing difficulties from all the parties concerned. The extracts are only just sufficient to show how Nagin's mind worked on each sucessive plan or obstruction to a plan.

The article (page 162) *Learning from Experience* in "Seminar" December 1959 must be gratefully acknowledged to that periodical. It is the only summary Nagin wrote of his own experience in Koraput.

PART 1

Nagin's Field of Work

Editorial Introduction

KORAPUT

NAGIN'S FIELD OF WORK

The reader who is unfamiliar with the process of rural development in India since 1952—or 1947, for that matter—may need some guidance. It would be difficult to follow the value of Nagin's work in Koraput—and the experienced support by Annasaheb Sahasrabudhe, his chief there—were it not adequately appreciated what a great gulf yawns between Government development operations and those of the Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh (All-India Brotherhood for Every Service)—ABSSS for short.

The relative state of confusion which was created by Nagin's and Annasaheb's effort to form a working collaboration with Government must be understood. This is a difficult situation to present, from the mass of material available to the editor. However, the reader who has patience supported by an active interest in the acculturation of tribal people, will (it is hoped) get a sufficient impression of the maelstrom which a critical attitude towards Government's cherished routines will produce, when it is inevitably expressed in action as well as words.

It is necessary to make some exploration of the depth and course of the whirlpool in order to appreciate the strength, profundity and essential love for people which made the principal characteristics of Nagin's mind. Only out of some appreciation of Nagin's determination for truth in thought and action, set against the absence of these characteristics in an impersonal

and inefficient Government, is it possible to understand the stresses which he endured for the greater part of five years in Orissa.

The ABSSS is the largest of the non-sectarian bodies which operate in complete independence of governments in India. It contains the most devoted and least power-hungry of the Gandhian "constructive workers". Its seniors—those who are still active—are of this editor's own vintage; that is to say they are around the sixties. Most of us started working with Gandhiji in the 'Twenties or 'Thirties.

The contrasts between rural development operations by government agencies and by Gandhians of the unpolitical kind (such as the ABSSS) will appear later in this editorial. In the meantime some account must be given to outline the views of social scientists on tribal folk in East India. This is necessary to appreciate the different attitudes and methods common to Gandhian groups.

I. THE LESSONS TO BE LEARNT FROM SOCIAL SCIENTISTS

Social and cultural anthropologists, sociologists, archaeologists who relate their findings to modern culture-forms, and political scientists, besides economists, have all worked in this region during the last half-century. Social psychology is usually implicit in the social anthropologist's work.

As one of the last "reserves" of tribesfolk, the Orissa and neighbouring forests in the Eastern Ghats have been a mine of data, especially for the social anthropologist. The changes which have followed each other in quick succession since the 1914 War, make these tribes a fascinating study of social, economic and political dynamics.

One general impression which seems to emerge from this volume of study is that Orissa and the contiguous areas of Madhya Pradesh are probably the richest quarry for discovery of the relationships between traditional values and patterns of folk-belief. The consequent social systems are well described. From these, it is possible to see the effects of the transition stage while the people are settling into a peasantry. It is the transition which is now getting analytical attention.[1]

The field of exploration is one in which the micro-study has a particularly essential application. It is further necessary to broaden the area of investigation, especially where politics have to be analysed; and this is now beginning to be a new style of concentration.

All such studies are enthusiastically hailed by Governments in India, more especially when the social scientist is an Indian. With delays, the material recorded is often worked into Government's Extension training programmes. In that process there has invariably been both condensation and the injection of the Congress principles of ideology. Together, these official interpretations have mishandled the social scientists' findings in a way which is surely destructive of their scientific truth.

One cannot, however, fully understand why the application of the lessons learnt by scientific study should continue to be so blandly ignored in the fieldwork required of the National Extension Service (NES). One outstanding example of the official brush-off to scientific truth is in the pains taken to avoid recognizing all castes, except of course those which Governments in India are legally obliged to recognize, so as to determine the eligibility for special favours of *adivasis* and other *harijans*.

[1] Evelyn Wood: *Caste's Latest Image*, pp. 951/952 Economic Weekly, Vol. 16, No. 23, 6th June, 1964 — summarizes, by its references, some of the principal, recent studies made in different parts of India, including Orissa.

Sarvodaya and the Social Sciences

Sarvodaya development workers, including those of the ABSSS, do not consciously concern themselves with the analyses or the conclusions of social scientists. Naturally, the good Sarvodaya worker thankfully uses the bare data furnished by scientific study.

Gandhian philosophy is didactic; reasonable when its extensive premises are considered. These last consist in a formulation of ideals from which the logic of development is naturally inductive. The trend is to set up utopian principles as the aim, and, in so far as these were specified in detail by Gandhiji, the Word can seldom be questioned.

This perfectly logical attitude can best be appreciated by a reading of another work of Annasaheb's on Koraput.[2]

Bhoodan and Gramdan

Among other, recent constructive activities, the ABSSS has taken on the task of giving a growing shape to the *Bhoodan* and *Gramdan* movement of Vinoba Bhave. This had better be described for the sake of the innocent reader.

The word "*dan*" means a "free gift". Stress on the freedom of the gift is necessary to description in India, because the cultures, particularly of North India, enjoined a number of "gifts" of service—and even some of property, certainly produce—which were by no means freely made. The *rajas* who ruled parts of Southern Orissa were specialists in extracting such "gifts".

"*Bhoodan*" means a gift of land, and "*Gramdan*", the gift by a whole community, particularly a village or a *jati* (sub-caste) therein, of the land and public amenities severally owned. In the case of unmixed tribal people, before they become part of the peasantry, land is not so much owned by individuals, as it is

[2] Sahasrabudhe, A. W.: *Report on Koraput Gramdans 1960*, author as publisher at A.B. Sarva Seva Sangh, Sevagram, Wardha, M.P., India; 117 p.; Map, no Index. Period covered 1956–59.

the joint property of the local tribe-group. Land as property is rather a different concept among tribesfolk, especially in hill-forest tracts like some parts of those in Koraput District.

To the *adivasis* (tribesmen) of Koraput, who inhabit these remote areas, property in land is neither clearly defined as individual nor as jointly owned. For government revenue purposes, the head of a family is registered as the owner of land which is cultivated steadily or intermittently, and with tools, instead of by the traditional "slash and burn". This term covers itinerant sowing and harvesting of many different styles. It is also broadly called "shifting cultivation". Fortunately it seems to have almost died out in the Koraput forests, and hardly exists in the cleared, "plains" areas adjacent to the hills.

The joint property aspect of the land is a tribal custom, which is evidenced today only in the fact that a local group of the same tribe and *jati* will defend the rights of an individual family registered for revenue payment. The group will even more vigorously defend its real, joint claims to pasture—which may mean illegal "slash and burn" in reserved forest areas.

Even though no implement other than an axe and a digging stick (to plant seeds) may be used, and fire may be avoided, shifting cultivation is, by itself, destructive of forest growth. Certain mountainous forests in France are most successfully cultivated both for trees and shifting crops, by the controlled use of fire. The Khonds of Jeypore call the practice, in their local form, *podu*,[3] and the Bhumiya among the Murias of Bastar, classify four styles: *penda*, *dippa* and *parka* or *dahi*. It has never come clear what term is used by the corresponding tribes of the Koraput hills.

It is a little difficult to know what lands were given in *Gramdan* by the Koraput hill-forest tribes; but one must assume that it was the revenue-bearing lands adjacent to their villages that were individually gifted. There may also have been some

[3] *podu* cf. pp. 100/31 Verrier Elwin: *The Baiga*, John Murray, London, 1939, 550 p. Illustd. See also ref. to "*The Murias..*" below.

inter-family understanding that they were assigning such rights as they had jointly maintained to use the forest as "pasture"—only practising "slash and burn" when they were sure that no forest guard was likely to visit them.

Development of Regular Field-crop Farming

The objectives of agricultural development among the Koraput tribes have never been very clearly set out. In the first place, most of the tribes seem to be mixed through the villages. That, at any rate, is the impression given by Nagin's own report.[4]

At any rate, no kind of shifting cultivation is mentioned by Nagin, and it is inconceivable that he could not have known of it. One must assume that it had been completely crushed by 1959, though there is no doubt that Khonds, Porjas and Gadabas were, in Bastar, and probably at an earlier stage in less accessible Orissa, still changing over from axe-cultivation to permanent fields.[5]

The process of settling as peasants is quite advanced in the "plains" areas of Southern Koraput. This was the greater part of the area in which Nagin worked. The Pilot Project area contained, besides about 218 square miles according to the Village Land Records, over 300 square miles of reserved forest in the Ramgiri range. It does not, however, appear that Nagin ever tackled the forest-dwellers. The principal tribes in his "plains" villages were Bhumiyas and Ranas.

The discussion by this editor of the subject of the change from "slash and burn" to permanent field-crops has strong reasons. The ABSSS, as a whole, seems to have ignored this factor of emotional disaster to the tribesfolk within their care who are either passing through the transition to a settled

[4] Parekh, Nagin: page 10 ff. Sections 6, 7 and *passim: Boipariguda Pilot Project; Progress Report, 2 Oct. 1959 to 31 Dec. 1960, 61 p.* cyclo./mimeo.

[5] Verrier Elwin: pp. 24/29 and passim, *The Muria and their Ghotul*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1947, 737 p., Illustr.

peasantry; or for whom the process of settlement recalls a nostalgic memory of the freer life in the forests.

Despite their delayed, official recognition of the special status of tribal people, both the Governments of the Indian Union and of Orissa State are described in conversation by most social-scientist visitors to Orissa as callous and indifferent to the special difficulties and needs of the tribesfolk.

Yet by far the fairest comment is a written one[6] which describes an anthropologist's view, with a political slant. Bailey is very clear that villagers and Government are both at fault. Their failure lies in establishing communications, in the modern usage of that overworked word. They fail to understand each other increasingly, as they must if the villages are to be developed.

Nagin's experiences of dealing with both government officials and mixed tribes in villages during the last year of his life cast a good deal of doubt on Bailey's assumption of the capacity of villagers—anyway at this level—to do anything much from *their* side about improving communications with Government. However, Bailey's allocation of mutual blame evidently refers to people in a more advanced area.

Nagin himself had a distinct advantage over his colleagues of the ABSSS in Koraput, even including Annasaheb, by having read more widely about tribal people and the vital roots of their emotional lives. He therefore appreciated much more profoundly their personal problems in adopting the new styles of field-crop agriculture.

There is an interesting point to be followed here, with regard to African situations which are said to be similar. It may be that establishment of modern farming will not prove so easy as has been anticipated in Central and Northerly Africa. Possibly there are lessons to be learnt by African Governments from

[6] Bailey, F. G.: pp. 58/59, *Politics and Social Changes/Orissa in 1959*. Univ. of California and Oxford University Press Bombay, 1963. 241 p. Maps.

Nagin's experience in this respect. Changes which fail to take root in people's lives are once again shown, by Nagin's experience, to be factors which delay a more permanent adaptation to the modern world.

The Co-operative Society as a Principle

The Co-operative economic system has been attacked as an idealistic failure in India, and with good empirical reasons. When Annasaheb explains how Nagin was wedded to co-operatives, he also appreciates the local situation of the tribal people. Among them live low caste Hindus—e.g. Dombs, (*harijans*)—who have proved to be more quickly adaptable; and who are, therefore, able to appear cleverer in modern ways than families still enmeshed in lives which were still mainly formed of tribal patterns a generation or two previously.

Nagin points out[7] that Dombs have taken to petty trading and money-lending, and how the job of herdsman to a village makes money for them. They are, in many such adaptive ways, more likely to adjust from barter to a cash economy much earlier than the tribesfolk.

At the other end of the social scale are the immigrant non-tribals who live in the "plains" area, and who far exceed the Bhumiyas or Ranas—the dominant tribal people—as landlords. The non-tribal landlords have (in some cases since the latter part of the XIXth century) squeezed the tribal people unmercifully, and they constituted the most solid and ruthless opposition to the ABSSS plans for improving the lives of the *adivasis*. (This last word is such a useful compound term for the several tribal concepts that we shall henceforth use it instead of tribesfolk etc.).

Between the non-*adivasis* and the Domb *harijans*, the *adivasis* of Koraput are pretty heavily taxed, particularly by monetary transactions. They are still clumsy about money. They are also prevented from engaging in all sorts of productive, and

7 Parekh, Nagin: op. cit. and *passim*.

most investment undertakings, through the usual threatening pressures by money-lenders.

The combination, just sketched, of economic, social and emotional difficulties makes it particularly hard to improve any aspects of life among Koraput *adivasis*. There is no doubt that the human satisfactions of exercising greater skills work well as incentives—particularly when new agricultural techniques are successfully adopted. The co-operative system—as a convenience, not a principle—makes use of all three *adivasi* characteristics which cause these problems in adaptation to modern ways.

The enforced solidarity of tribal groups—call it the weakness of clinging together, if you prefer—make the sharing arrangements of co-operatives seem natural and relatively easier for *adivasis* than the modish competition displayed by their more prosperous neighbours. Similarly, the problem of how to get their needs satisfied in money systems other than through their rapacious neighbours can be co-operatively solved.

Lastly the co-operators are obliged to meet and talk before any of them can undertake technical changes in cattle-handling, land-improvement or cultivation. Meetings—to which Nagin was much addicted—enable the emotional problems to be brought out in discussions; and there is no quicker way for any people to reach at least interim, experimental solutions.

2. *THE ABSSS EFFORT IN KORAPUT*

Annasahéb Sahasrabudhe, who was Nagin's chief in Koraput ABSSS, has already contributed a particularly penetrating paper to this volume. That paper expressed Annasaheb's first reaction to Nagin's death. It analyses his character as a colleague.

That reader who has a practical interest in rural development

may, however, be helped by knowing rather more about the whole of the Koraput *Gramdans* Project. For this reason, parts from a later paper of Annasaheb's are quoted below, *in extenso*.

Where the actual phrasing of the original Marathi is closely reproduced, the text is placed within quotation marks. Otherwise a condensation by the editor has been provided to cover the additional information provided by Annasaheb, and, when necessary, his views. We begin by a description of the terrain and the people in those parts of Koraput District which contained *Gramdan* villages.

Koraput District consists mainly of hills. These are largely covered by forest. Both in the hills and the adjacent plains, tribal people at different stages of settlement as peasants form the majority of the population.

Possibly the compact nature of these tribal cultures, which are now being slowly worn away, is the main factor in presenting Annasaheb's picture of people in extreme poverty who do not appear to be either mean or depraved, which are, he says, all too common characteristics in peasant-India.

It is only a short time, certainly not more that half-a-dozen generations in any case, since these Koraput tribes were contacted by visitors from the outside world. The political and economic machinery of the surrounding world has only begun to grind the tribesfolk of these areas during the past hundred years.

The area worked by Nagin contained a mixture of tribal and peasant population which offered a kind of spectrum of the process of settlement. Most of his territory was in the plains; though, in those cleared areas for field-crops, adjacent to the forested hills, the conversion of tribal to peasant life was fairly recent. Nagin cannot have worked with many of the pure tribal groups, who live deep in the forest. The evidence of his own recorded experience would surely have made it clear if he had done so.

One must, however, realize that the bulk of Koraput District was occupied by hilly forests. The pure tribal population is

unquestionably the natural source of tradition even for the more settled fragments of the same peoples in the plains.

Social Change, from Tribes to Peasant Villages

More especially in the Boipariguda area, where Nagin's last year or so was spent, the tribes "have been in contact with traders, money-lenders and the Government's Administration for a number of decades." There are, in those villages, "three or four tribal groups living together, so that a fairly rigid caste structure is evolved." In this system, the former, mutually recognized status of different tribes has caused their recently contiguous groups to live on a social ladder of the common Indian peasant-pattern.

It is, says Annasaheb, more particularly in the "few important villages" that persons from both urban and peasant societies outside Koraput Districts have acquired lands and settled with their families. These immigrants are suspiciously like colonists. They include traders who are also money-lenders, and retired government servants, often from the Police, Forest and Revenue Departments.

Some of the colonists acquired their Koraput properties by highly dubious means.

> "Although they are only a handful," says Annasaheb, these colonists are "the most powerful persons in "the area, and . . . . hold almost all the important elective posts at the *Panchayat Samiti* level all over Koraput. Their political power is next only to that of the educated professional classes in the few towns that there are in the District.
>
> "Most of the *adivasis*. . .make a living from agriculture and the collection of forest produce. Almost none have taken to commerce, industry, the professions, or the public services. These occupations are in the hands of Telegus, Oriyas, Muslims and Dombs. Of these immigrants into Koraput, many were settled in previous generations, and they now form a major portion of the townships' population at Koraput, Rayagada,

Jeypore, Nowrangpur, and other places."[8]

Koraput District exports a considerable surplus of both agricultural and forest produce. To the values of both of these classes of merchandise, *adivasi* labour—and, surely, their land?—contribute the prime factors. The agricultural items marketed include rice, both unhusked and milled; millets like *ragi;* and oilseeds such as nigerseed. Forest produce is principally timber (teak, *sal* and the gumkino hardwood); but valuable items like myrabolams (for tanning and dyeing) and lac (for paint, varnish and laminated manufactures) offer further development possibilities.

The margins earned by the sale of these surpluses do not, however, go to alleviate *adivasi* poverty. Most of the earnings enrich the big traders in the towns. What reaches the villages goes almost entirely into the pockets of non-*adivasi* landlords.

Recent Social and Political History of Koraput

"The Independence movement of 1942" says Annasaheb, found Koraput District taking "an active part" so that "a few among the martyrs were enlightened *adivasis*. As a result of this association with political action, the local community leaders do not totally lack social and political consciousness."

"Therefore, when the first strong wave of *Gramdan* movement hit Koraput in 1955, local leaders enthusiastically surrendered to it. An astonishingly large number of villages declared *Gramdans*.

"The Sarvodaya leaders felt that they could best demonstrate the socio-economic potentialities of Sarvodaya philosophy in Koraput, where they had received such a widespread and joyous response. They also hoped that, as workers began to comb the area intensively, the whole district could gradually

[8] The 1961 Census shows *Koraput* as a new town of 7,500 population since 1951; Rayagada (the Railway Station for the District) — 14,500 (+ 56%); Jeypore 25,300 (+ 24%); Nowrangpur 10,380 (+ 42%).

be turned into a *Gramdan.*
"The Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh started on its development experiment in the beginning of 1956. Teams of workers attached to development centres, located in *Gramdan* pockets, were to form the main channels through which the Sarva Seva Sangh was to reach individual villages." The objective was "a comprehensive socio-economic development of the *Gramdan* villages. The programme was rather over-ambitious; it tried to do too many things in a short time.
"Nagin came to Koraput sometime in April, 1956. He spent the first few months going round the District so as to get acquainted with the material and human background, and the ABSSS scheme. He spent six weeks at a basic education institution learning Oriya. After this preparation, he chose Limbaguda as his headquarters and went to stay there during November, 1956.
"The choice of Limbaguda seems natural enough. Two residents from the village had a background of active participation in the " '42 Movement", besides a long association with the Congress organization in the District. Both of them had been active in the area's *Gramdan* movement, and were known to the leading Sarvodaya workers in the District. One of the two is of an ebullient nature whose boyish, overflowing enthusiasm might have attracted Nagin. Indeed, Nagin may have seen in this man some promise of making Limbaguda an effective demonstration to other villages. Nagin made a intimate, loyal, and lasting friendship with Narsibhai; and, throughout his stay there, they stuck to each other through many crises.
"Apart from the presence of these two persons of some local standing, there is nothing distinctive about Limbaguda. In every other way, it is an ordinary *adivasi* village. It did not even have the advantage of being served by a road. It is a plains village, in which agriculture forms almost the sole occupation. Limbaguda is a recently settled village; the present elders are the second resident generation to adopt local field-crop cultivation.

"The lands owned by the two or three original settlers have been divided amongst the brothers (of succeeding generations), who form a group of elders. This group conducts the village affairs, and represents a typical pattern in the area. Equally typical is the absence of a really rich landlord. Only two or three of the village families have enough lands to maintain themselves solely from agriculture, so that they can afford to work their land mainly through employed labour. The rest do all the work of cultivation for themselves.

"There are quite a large number of families which subsist either wholly or mainly on what work they can find in others' fields. Until recently this means of employment was severely limited. The main outlet for some of the young boys of Limbaguda village (and from the area generally) is still by migration to Assam, where they work in the tea-plantations for a few months. The economic state described here is typical of the whole area around Limbaguda.

"Although Nagin and his colleagues embarked on this adventure with high hopes, they ran into rough weather almost immediately. This happened as soon as they tried to work out the equitable redistribution of land in the *Gramdani* villages. The bigger land-holders in almost every one of the *Gramdani* villages then backed out, and many even became enemies of the movement.

"The co-operative outlook and the feeling of responsibility for the community, which was generated by the first wave of the movement, was thus replaced by a hostile attitude" towards the development workers who had counted on such integrative factors. The hostility was from "the village leaders, while the majority of the people exhibited no more than silent apathy."

Hostile Attitudes and Actions by the Orissa Government

"In 1957 the Government of Orissa dealt a stunning blow to the movement. It will take years of patient, selfless effort to undo the harm which has been done" by those official

measures to this people's movement towards co-operative living. "From June, 1957, the State Government adopted a vicious and hostile attitude towards the movement. The following quotation from the printed Report[9] is apposite.

'Government officials and their henchmen started encouraging donors of land to take back their gifts and withdraw from the *Gramdan* community. Criminal cases were launched (against development workers). It began to be whispered that most of the *Gramdans* were bogus. There was no doubt that an all-out offensive was set in action against the movement.'

"The group at Limbaguda are even more caustic in their judgement. They say, '. . . for reasons best known to themselves they (the Government) ordered an extensive inquiry into *Gramdan* gift-deeds in a manner which indirectly fixed every donor as a culprit and every *Bhoodan* worker as an enemy of the established order.' "

There is factual justification in Nagin's case for this last remark. Prior to December 1958 a criminal case was registered against him. It was subsequently withdrawn; but it cannot have been a helpful situation in which to do development work, knowing that the Government viewed one as a criminal.

"The Government's Co-operative Department added misery to insult. 'On the grounds of their having renounced all rights over land, and, hence, being no longer in possession of any tangible security, the *Gramdani* villages were refused loans by the (officially-supported) Co-operative Credit Societies.' A most tragic and ironical situation was created where 'the Government seemed bent on proving all land-gifts as fraud; and the co-operative administration behaved as if all *Gramdanis* had become destitutes.' "

Nagin and his colleagues therefore had to work against a growing attitude of active "hostility by Government, and by most village leaders. It was most fortunate that Nagin was

[9] Sahasrabudhe, A. W. (Annasaheb): page 9, op. cit.

endowed with high qualities of patience and perseverance. His peaceable nature, unassuming manner and superb sense of tact made it impossible for his opposition to force a showdown upon him. Even though he never succeeded wholly in bringing about a change of heart, he persuaded the opposition to accept a situation of deadlock. He hoped that one result of development work would be to revolutionize the balance of forces in local society, and thus to resolve the deadlock in his favour."

3. *THE LIMBAGUDA PROGRAMME*

The Limbaguda area in which Nagin worked from November 1956 had 43 villages as *Gramdans* out of a total of 97, with a combined population of about 24,500. It is not clear from the data available to what extent either the preliminary ABSSS work, up to 2 October 1959, or the subsequent Pilot Project, succeeded in serving all the villages.

Annasaheb's condensed account of what Nagin had organized gives a good bird's-eye view:

"The main activities undertaken by the Limbaguda centre were as follows:

1. Bullock distribution to village-families who received land through the agency of the *Gramsabha*.
2. Organization of co-operative provision stores at Limbaguda and Daraguda.
3. Contour-bunding and levelling work in Limbaguda and Daraguda.
4. Construction of *Gandhighars*,[10] Community Centres, drinking-water wells, village industries' godowns, and any other essential public buildings.
5. Supply of the farmers' credit needs.

6. Organization of a collective-farming society at Limbaguda.

"Except for the last item, these projects broadly fall into two groups. The objectives of advancing credit and distributing bullocks were to satisfy credit needs both for consumption and production. The running of a provision store had the further, immediate effect of stopping gross exploitation by the trader. The store's long-term objective was, however, to be turned into a purchasing centre for marketing village-produce.

"Land-development work and construction work were two parts of a wage-distribution programme. The aim was to help in the recovery of loans advanced both to marginal cultivators and to landless labourers. When the programme of land-development was undertaken in Daraguda and Limbaguda the idea was gradually to cover all the *Gramdan* villages. By providing steady employment during the slack season, the incomes of the small land-holders would increase. Credit loans would be more regularly recovered.

"With the completion of such an intensive land-development programme, employment on and production from the land would increase, leading to a permanent rise in levels of income. An effort was made towards capital formation, by deducting six *paise* per rupee[11] from the wages distributed. The *Gram-sabha* fund, created out of his saving, was to be utilized in giving loans, particularly to landless labourers in the villages."

Credit Programme: Performance

"The group at Limbaguda did well in both types of credit

[10] *Gandhighars* may be understood as a sort of secular temple. They are normally places for meditation, reading and quiet discussion, on Gandhian principles. They may be used for hymn-singing by groups. They may have a small Gandhian library, and symbols such as the *charka* spinning wheel.

[11] A rupee was equivalent to 192 *paise*. Therefore this levy is less than $3\frac{1}{8}\%$.

programmes. By June 1955, they had distributed cash and kind loans as follows:

1.	Paddy	2,150 maunds, valued at	Rs. 15,050
2.	Ragi	500 „ „ „	Rs. 3,500
3.	Cash	(short-term)	Rs. 4,700
4.	Cash	(medium-term: Bullock pairs distributed)	Rs. 2,500
			Rs. 25,750

The advances were made to 830 families in 50 villages and hamlets.

"Over eighty per cent of the borrowers were either farmers with uneconomic holdings or tenant-cultivators. Even so, the recoveries were satisfactory because, so long as loyalty to the *Gramdan* idea was strong, the *Gramsabha* exerted a moral pressure on the loanee to reply; it even assumed a community responsibility for the repayment of loans made in the village.

"Although, on the whole, the experience of recoveries was good, there emerged a hard core of thirty to forty per cent defaulters. Some of them were given loans out of all proportion to their capacity to repay, through favouritism and misguidance on the part of the local worker. Some of the loanees were found either to have left the area, or to have died. There were cases in which it was found that individuals had played double; loanees with the names recorded proved to be untraceable. Finally there were quite a number of borrowers who were intractable and defiant in refusing to pay their dues.

"As *Gramdan* enthusiasm receded, and the local leaders adopted a hostile attitude, the last type of defaulters became bolder. More or less openly, they declared their intention not to pay back what they had borrowed."

Wage-Distribution Programme: Performance

"The total expenditure on the construction and land-develop-

ment programmes till June 1958 came to about Rs. 30,400. Wages distributed roughly totalled Rs. 20,000 to 22,000."

"The hope that wages distributed through the two (construction and land) development programmes would help towards the recovery of loans from those who lacked other resources proved to be delusory. A large number of loanees usually repaid their borrowings out of their agriculture's produce, so that no cash deduction from wages was necessary.

"Almost all the defaulters had, however, taken care not to engage in ABSSS development work. In this way, they made it impossible for the ABSSS, as an employer, to deduct a portion of the wages due, in order to reimburse itself as a lender. A large number of labourers were not covered by any loan programme at all. As a result, one of the main objectives of this programme was simply not touched."

A Local Form of Credit Agency: Grain Golas

"The loans advanced by the Sarva Seva Sangh through *Gramsabhas* were not legally secured, as *Gramsabhas* were not registered bodies. No legal action could be instituted against a defaulter. The risk of continuing to undertake this programme through *Gramsabhas* became too great, as the attitude of the people changed.

"The group at Limbaguda therefore took a most practical and sound decision; to channelize the loans through the *Gram Panchayat* Grain *Gola* Co-operative Societies, which the Government's Co-operative Department were then promoting. This is a good example of the way Nagin worked. He was always prepared to compromise so long as his main interest itself was not modified in the process.

"The whole group at Limbaguda took the lead in organizing four *Gram Panchayat* Grain *Gola* Co-operative Societies—(at Boipariguda, Digapur, Kenduguda and Ramgiri) — during the years 1958 and 1959. When they did this, they extended their field of activity to include the non-*Gramdani* villages in these Panchayats.

"Although credit activity took root and continued to expand, it had no appreciable effect on the farm-yields. What had happened was that, instead of going to the money-lenders, villagers came to the Sangh or the Society, because the loans then cost them less. The use to which the loans were put remained the same. They needed grain either for consumption till the new harvest came in; or (as the local currency) to pay wages for transplanting and weeding operations."

"*The Effect of Providing Credit*

"The ABSSS workers further discovered that the provision of credit on reasonable terms did not, as they had hopefully anticipated, act as a trigger to release forces which would transform socio-economic conditions.

"Providing credit on easy terms or running a fair-price shop certainly helped to minimize the exploitation of the *adivasi*. Neither form of concrete aid, however, re-created the people's enthusiasm for *Gramdan;* nor did it turn them towards its logical sequel, the equitable redistribution of land. The people were not prompted by either of these means to revolutionize their agricultural practices. Nor did such outside help stimulate them to undertake the expected, manifold community-development activities on their own."

The third facility, the fairly substantial wage-distribution programme, also failed to help in changing the people's outlook. The result of all that organized and paid work was a dilution of the local traditions of group-work and self-help. The people came to lean upon the services of the ABSSS workers at Limbaguda. Because the development agency had organized work for the community, and had paid wages for it, the new situation thus created also caused a new dependence of the villages on outsiders. Gradually, the people reached a condition where they did less and less voluntary labour to make any improvements either for the village as a whole; or even within individual families.

Annasaheb also quotes from Nagin's summary verdict which appears on later pages of this book. Briefly, this verdict records Nagin's impression that his attempt to recruit local residents into development-work had proved a failure. It seemed clear enough to Nagin and his colleagues, when they started work from Limbaguda, that those who appeared to be the leaders, mainly because of their enthusiasm for *Gramdan*, which their neighbours had accepted, could be built up into stronger positions, as exemplars, if not to exercise authority.

In practice, what happened was that the association of these outstanding villagers with a development organization imported from outside the area gave these chosen people an exaggerated sense of their own superiority amongst their neighbours. This might not have been so bad, were it not for the way in which they expressed this new feeling of self-importance. Unfortunately, they chose the commonplace way of personally rejecting all manual labour. This course of progressive inaction seems to be associated with the rise of petty hierarchs in caste-societies all over India.

Nagin himself admitted that either he and his colleagues had formed a wrong conception of who were the previous leaders; or else his group had used totally wrong methods of handling these persons as local assistants, which resulted in the destruction of whatever trust the majority of people had in the supposed "leaders."

The Collective-Farming Experiment

It had turned out that the success achieved by the Limbaguda group in organizing credit did nothing to improve the people's wish to follow the principles of *Gramdan*. Some new means of promoting "a co-operative way of life" was therefore the group's next effort towards the same end of working out *Gramdan* principles. There were not enough families with the rudiments of co-operative thinking in any one village, to make a single

place the area of the next experiment.

Instead, the Limbaguda group determined to build up from those people who were already able to think in this direction, but who lived in three or four adjacent villages. By distributing the effort topographically it seemed as if a fresh start could be made. This is described fairly completely in the note writton by Nagin and his colleagues from Limbaguda at the end of 1958, titled "*A Perspective View of Koraput Gramdan*" (p. 154).

The principles as well as the data are fully set out in this detailed account of the experiment; and it would appear that three different objectives were confused, by the fact that each represented totally different kinds of purpose.

As a quick summary of the two-year experience which is here referred to, it may be pointed out that "rational use of the *land and increased values of production*" *obtained thereby* cannot be achieved while one is still "experimenting with a system of supervised credit" for those who are going to work the collective farming system.

As if the conflict involved in this pair were not enough, the third project launched was "to study the pattern of the employment" of the eleven families concerned. Thus research was added to two divergent programmes of action, from the purposive aspect. Naturally the result was a confused failure, and the sample for any of the three procedures was quite *inadequate*, even as a source of reliable observations.

4. A FRESH START: ATTEMPTED COLLABORATION WITH GOVERNMENT

It so happened that the year 1958 represented for the ABSSS, as a whole, the most troublesome of its period in Orissa. The

difficulties of pursuing the principles of *Gramdan* to their logical conclusions in practice had been made too difficult to handle, principally because of the obstructive attitude of the State Government. Although this was not the only factor, and one which was almost as important was evidenced by the resignation of some of the best workers of the ABSSS in the area, the general mood, at the beginning of 1959, was one of the Sangh's withdrawal from the area.

Annasaheb makes this very clear, and explains that the Sangh had decided, at that date, to "limit its future work to a few centres." He adds that it was also necessary to "discourage these centres from starting any new and ambitious projects." At Limbaguda in particular, this policy was interpreted so that "only credit activity was to be continued with vigour, while all other activities would be allowed to come gradually to a standstill."

At the same time, events which are more fully described in later pages had resulted in mutual approaches between the ABSSS and the Government of Orissa, at a much higher level than previously. It appeared possible, early in 1959, that a *modus vivendi* could be reached. Annasaheb himself was somewhat sceptical about the possibility of working in collaboration with Government in the area; but Nagin was so keen to continue with the effort that Annasaheb finally acceded to the unusual fund of confidence which Nagin brought to his work. The complex negotiations which working with Government necessarily entailed had consequently begun about the end of January 1959.

In order to appreciate the extremely wide differences that had to be bridged between the Government concept and method of rural development and the approach adopted by the Sarvodaya group, the editor has found it necessary to insert, at this point, a description which may help readers unfamiliar with the situation to realize the strength of the contrast involved.

Development by Government and ABSSS Contrasted

The greatest difficulty in assessing Government's operations in rural development is the sharp distinction between theory and practice. There are, of course, a number of "model" Development Blocks where selected practices of Extension are shown off, according to theory. But in the general run of National Extension Service (NES) Development Blocks, the excellent principles on which lectures have been so generously lavished in training the field-workers, are simply not recognized by the controlling Administration.

When one questions this apparent waste of training, the answer is usually: "O yes, but we have so many targets to fill, and so many reports to write that we don't have time left for that sort of thing. Of course it's quite correct; but we don't have enough staff or time, you see."

Nevertheless, there are certain fundamental principles in Extension education which have been tested sufficiently for their validity to be unquestioned — among scientists, that is. Questions will always, it appears, arise from administrators; and even more from politicians in power.

The Choice of Development Targets

It is obvious that development of rural people consists in enabling them to make improvements in their work, or in other aspects of their lives. It seems equally obvious that they must adopt such new practices, or changes in former practices, with *self-confidence*. Each new practice or change must give its adopter at least *self-satisfaction*, if not a new prestige among his neighbours.

Then, and only then, there is a chance that the successful practitioner of what he and his family consider to be an improvement, *for them*, will diffuse among their neighbours that same desire to test it for themselves. This is the way in which "targets" become vitally rooted improvements, instead of a series of disconnected pieces of advice to the villager from an Extension Service, on which it seems (to him) safer to say "Yes" and,

if possible, to act as he is advised.

The Indian villager has an ambivalent attitude towards Government's agents. Advice from an official Extension worker must always be treated with caution. If he accepts it, the villager might get something out of it — e.g., priority in supplies of some building material, or even a share in a Government grant. If he feels that to take the Extension advice will cost him more than he gets from Government, then the villager, especially if he is poor, or inexperienced in the ways of the outside world, is in a quandary.

To reject such advice may put him in the officials' bad books, and that is always dangerous. Therefore it is safer for him to say: "Yès, I'll do that", even if he has not the slightest intention of doing it. Safest of all is to act as he is advised, if he doesn't lose any of his present security by doing so. This explains much of the supposed enthusiasm with which the poorest folk in villages will give their free labour for building roads and performing other activities, as prescribed by the Village Volunteer Force (one of the devices thought up in Delhi to squeeze a bit more out of the "apathetic masses").

Clearly, this sort of official development work has practically nothing to do with *Extension education*, and hence with *self-development*. There is not the slightest prospect, along these well-worn tracks of development by directive, of getting improved practices to take root in rural areas. These methods will not start the growth of fresh desires, and implementation of local concepts towards improvement. Unless there is a genuine increase of mutual trust and understanding in the relationship between the Extension Agency and the people in transition to new ways of life and work, no self-development will emerge through such Extension work.

The kind of relationship to be cultivated depends upon a steady push towards the completion of a true communications cycle. Orders and "directives" framed as advice can only strangle free communications. In that situation, relationships between villages and the outside world will remain as distrustful and

without mutual understanding as they have been for centuries.

Universal Principles of Extension Education

It is for these reasons that practical and experienced workers in the field of Extension education have formulated clear and simple rules about methods in the field, which will be condensed here. It should be remarked, at this stage, that these principles are certainly taught amidst the crowded curricula of official Extension Training Courses in India — but (we are told) there "isn't time" to put all that is taught into practical effect in the villages!

1. **No change is to be promoted as a Target until at least one family in every neighbourhood has tested it to see whether or not it brings improvement to them, and as they value it.**

   In the two decisions made by that family:—
   (*a*) to make the tests of the proposed change;
   (*b*) to judge whether results of the test make it worth while adopting the changed or new practice
   — it is required that the confidence and satisfaction be built up, if necessary, by the Extension fieldworker, as early as possible.

2. **The Extension staff is responsible to ensure the most thorough testing by the experimenting family. In that process, the fieldworkers must continuously discuss the change with the people.**

   The purpose of this continuous discussion is to make sure that people understand as completely as they are able what are the probable advantages, and what are the possible disadvantages (or gains and losses respectively) of adopting the new practice.

This discussion method won't work unless rural people themselves find out and build lists of the advantages and disadvantages. It is useless for the fieldworker to lecture to them. It is their mental work that is needed to start a wave of

self-development.

Provided both principles are constantly served by the Extension staff, as early a date as is possible among that particular group of rural folk will be reached when:—

A. The Extension Service ceases to propose and direct "targets"; and becomes, instead, the adviser which helps villagers to work out the priorities in which they can test a series of their own demands for changes.

B. The people use the Extension Service primarily as a source of technical advice, and only secondarily for other facilities, in either testing or adopting the new practices which they themselves have proposed.

The above condenses one aspect of the theory of Extension education. It is a theory which has been applied with startling success in both peasant and tribal India. The only such successes of which this editor knows are practically all the result of patient service by educational groups having no official or political axe to grind, nor any subvention from Government anywhere. One outstanding exception is Verrier Elwin's work among the North-East Frontier Agency tribes of Assam, which *was* sponsored by Government.

Contrast: the Official Imposition of "Extension" Targets

As remarked above, the educational process just outlined is a feature in the training of the National Extension Service (NES). Nevertheless, it is true that the desk-administration of this Government service does ask of the field-staff a volume of other work which is so large that it clearly cannot be combined with the process of Extension education. Whether consciously or not, the desk-men are therefore constantly brushing aside the whole business of education, by which adult villagers can be helped to find their own aims of development, and the means of attaining them.

In sum, it is fair to say that the educational method gets completely overwhelmed by the official urgency to attain its

centrally planned "targets". The obligation to write elaborate reports — especially when targets cannot be filled as instructed — possibly occupies even more time in the official's year.

It is worth remarking here that each household in every village served by the NES is supposed to make its own annual plan — of course restricted to the official targets. In this typical situation of Indian administrative ambivalence, naturally no "household plan" is ever made. If there be a nominal village plan, it is made by the "leaders" — i.e. those persons whom Government considers to provide suitable "channels" for its target-pressure.

This official force of course works by virtue at least of the "leaders' " attachment to the power they wield as Government's chosen men. Many of these are further motivated by the rake-off which they get from the grants made by the Government. There are, further, several other occasions of profit caused by exercising the delegated power of Government. For example, a "leader" can get jobs for his relatives or friends. He can exact a commission or some non-monetary favour from those to whom he arranges delivery of articles in short-supply. Among these goods are corrugated-iron sheets for roofing, fertilizers; and, correspondingly, the services of government's technical advisers — even hospital priorities.

Government's way is to promote by "directive". Its field-workers are sent to "discuss with the people" — which means to tell the "leaders":—

1. A message which they are to pass on to those whom they "lead";
   "This practice x is an improvement on your present method. Therefore we are planning for your village to change over to x".
2. Two 'recommendations for the 'leaders' — which mean orders passed to them, with an '. . or else . . .' neatly attached:—
   (*a*) "Through you, the leaders of village '**Z**', our grants and other facilities for practice x will be allotted."

The implication is: either 'Your neighbours fear and obey you because of your prosperity and hence ability to squeeze them' — or — 'You depend for your power on your neighbour's votes!'

(*b*) "See to it, therefore, that y (number of village families) take up this change, and report to us as soon as possible."

Thereafter the "Extension job" simply consists in chasing the "leaders". Whether or not the people want to make the change, or have thought it out in any way, even enough to determine whether it may be worth trying as an experiment, Government appears, impersonally of course, as if it couldn't care less.

Extension Education as practised by Nagin for the ABSSS

There is no question but that the cultivated relationships and the consequent range and depth of development practised by the ABSSS as a whole in the Koraput District, were infinitely superior to the corresponding performance of Government. This editor's knowledge of the fieldwork in Koraput District is superficial, except for Nagin's task; but in that particular field his files are *too* full of detail.

It is clear from these records that the universal principles set out above, as fundamentally required for sound development by Extension education, were followed to a remarkable extent by Nagin. It is something of a mystery how this could have come about, since he was quite innocent of training in Extension education. Moreover, his reading in the social sciences and that branch of applied social anthropology, with psychology, known as "Community Development" was slight.[12]

By the end of 1959, if not earlier, Nagin had a grasp of correct

[12] From June 1959, at any rate, Nagin did have (NP/EW 6. VI 59) the best of condensations known to the author on this subject:—
Mosher, A. T.: *Varieties of Extension Education and Community Development*, Comparative Extension Publication No. 2, New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell University, December 1958, 111 p.; No index, but amply cross-referenced.

method which was most unusually complete and consistent. It is a thousand pities that he did not record his experience in a less formal manner than the official Progress Report for Boipariguda already cited.[13]

5. *THE DANDAKARANYA PROJECT: A NEIGHBOUR-PROBLEM*

Before any consecutive account of the ABSSS attempts to collaborate with the Government of Orissa can be presented, another current problem of the Eastern Ghats must be outlined. This may help the reader towards some appreciation of the difficulties confronting Governments as a whole in India. Koraput District's western border is on the crest of the Eastern Ghats. Westward of the crest lies the State of Madhya Pradesh, within which another tribal territory was, during the same period, undergoing a planned development programme.

The "Dandakaranya Project" was promoted and administered, at that time, by the Union Government, presumably through its Ministry of Home Affairs. The forested hills are similar to those of Orissa, on the eastern side of the watershed; but they get a smaller rainfall, since the monsoon of that area blows from the North East, and the bulk of the water — between 70 and 80 inches a year, falls on the Orissa side. Further descriptions of the country and people are to be found in Elwin, 1947.[14]

It never became clear, from all the official Press Releases and rebuttals of public criticism that appeared about Dandakaranya,

13 Parekh, Nagin: *Boipariguda Pilot Project; op. cit.*

14 Verrier Elwin: *The Muria and their Ghotul. op. cit.* This work contains a fairly exhaustive list of authorities on the tribes of the whole Ghats region.

which one of its three highly vociferated objectives was meant to be primary:

1. To open a fresh tract of farmland, supposedly by clearing forests, and thus increase India's food-supply.
2. To provide a new home for "displaced persons" (refugees from East Bengal). As first announced, 300,000 were to be to be settled by 1962.
3. To lay the foundations of a new, dispersed industrial area like Asansol-Durgapur.

Geological survey had long disclosed that valuable minerals were waiting for mining enterprises in the same hills of Bastar State. There were also high-level discussions about a possible fourth objective: the development of the forests in the region.

As it has appeared in the Indian Press, intermittently, for about eight years now, Dandakaranya represents one of those traps for the most efficient of Government's officials, into which they have been smilingly pushed by ingenious Congress politicians in search of votes and world applause.

At the time of Nagin's experiences in Koraput, a highly experienced I.C.S. officer from the Punjab was sent to "open up Dandakaranya." He was a forceful, efficient type and he had the advantage in a development executive of being a man of action with an independent temperament. Without regard for "sound political principles", as some powerful Congressmen saw them, this officer either got things done, or said quite clearly when and why he couldn't get on with the job.

He was succeeded by two other prominent officers from Government's short list of skilled men, who were equally damned by political manoeuvres. In the meantime, Dandakaranya has, naturally, proved to be a completely inadequate refuge for the flow of families from East Bengal. The region has added nothing substantial to India's food-supply; neither its mining nor its forest-produce possibilities have yet been taken up.

The Coincidence of Periods: Koraput and Dandakaranya

The reader, may recall that Vinoba's sweep through Koraput for Gramdans was in 1955, (page 12) and that Nagin went to work there in April 1956. References from (page 13) onwards will make this clear. In 1957 (pages 14-15) the conflict with *Gramdan* was started by the Orissa Government.

In March 1957 the Government of India announced the Dandakaranya Project, and in October 1957, the first Administrator was appointed.

The Union Government's reaction to the Koraput troubles was sensitive and quick. One may assume that the special concern of the late Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, for the interests of tribesfolk was a principal factor in the "summit" meeting which was organized at Yelwal, in Mysore, between himself and Vinoba. This "National Conference" on *Bhoodan* and *Gramdan* was also attended by Congress Ministers on the one hand and Sarvodaya's top men on the other. This meeting took place in September 1957.

Such meetings do not necessarily produce any action on the part of Government; but in this case, Annasaheb reports that:

> "During the months after the September 1957 . . . Conference there were conversations between representatives of the Sarva Seva Sangh and the Union Ministry of Community Development and Co-operation, in order to decide how best to achieve co-ordination between the two movements — official and Sarvodaya — for comprehensive rural development."

It must have been very clear to anyone thinking about the two problems in adjacent regions, during 1958 that the same tribes were involved on both sides of the State's border. Since the Union Government was responsible for the Dandakaranya Project, in Madhya Pradesh, the highest level of the Congress ruling party must have been concerned with not only that Project, but also with the difficulties with which tribal development was obviously meeting, next door in Orissa.

It seems probable that at least Nehru, with his personal concern for the gradual development of tribespeople, must have pondered on the effects which might arise from these two wedges which were being driven into tribal lives, on each side of the States' border. From the point of view of the tribes, their inheritance, and their security in the forested hills were being threatened, by the Dandakaranya development and the socio-economic revolution of *Gramdan*.

There could have been no doubt in the minds of well-informed tribesmen that the Union Government intended to colonize Dandakaranya. Besides this, the consolidated operation of the ABSSS was also beginning to give practical shape to Vinobaji's whirlwind drive. The tribespeople, on the eastern side of the watershed had been persuaded to make "gifts" of land; they were now being asked to follow the practical implications of their generosity.

Both of these incursions from the settled world of urban people and peasantry surrounding the microcosms of tribal universes can easily be regarded by us, of that outside world, as thoroughly well-intentioned. We see such action as planned to ease the inevitable absorption of the tribes into modern civilization. But provided we have some knowledge of modern anthropology, we can hardly ignore the fact that tribesfolk would see this action to "help" them in a very different light.

6. *GENESIS OF THE BOIPARIGUDA PILOT PROJECT*

Annasaheb describes the outcome of the Mysore Conference and the subsequent discussions in Delhi, as follows:

"One of the many suggestions thrown up from these discussions was that the Sarva Seva Sangh should be entrusted with

the responsibility for the development of five areas, each of the size of a normal C.D. Block. The funds normally allotted to tribal Development Blocks would be placed at the disposal of the Sangh; the Sangh would chalk out its programme, and implement it through its own staff, by its own methods." "Towards the end of 1958, when the Sarva Seva Sangh had taken the decision to withdraw its Extension activities from Koraput District, the Development Commissioner for Orissa State made a proposal on the lines of the decisions arrived at by higher levels in Delhi. His suggestion was that the Sangh should co-operate with the Government of Orissa in Koraput District." He did not define the means at all clearly:—"In a few blocks the Sangh was to help the Government staff to implement its development programme, while in one area the Sangh would be entrusted with the responsibility of developing an area in its own way."

Probably because of the undertaking made by the Government of India, to facilitate the working out of *Gramdan*, the Union Minister for Community Development, S. K. Dey, visited Koraput in January 1959. The proposals which emerged from this meeting were rather clearer.

The conclusion of the negotiations was evidently of much more urgency for the ABSSS than for the Governments concerned. Doubtless for this reason, Annasaheb made a public statement at this stage, which was reported in the Bombay Press on 14 February, 1959. He was reported to have said that both officials and non-officials had been working against *Gramdan* in Orissa; and that the Government had acted in a particularly obstructive way against the working of the Koraput *Gramdans*.

By that time, Annasaheb had committed himself to undertake rural development work in Wardha District of Maharashtra State. Before he left Koraput, he was naturally anxious to provide all the outside support possible for Nagin. He therefore arranged for a meeting in Bombay, in order to obtain advice from persons more widely experienced in such collaborative work with Government, particularly, but not exclusively, in the field of rural work.

The Bombay Meeting of April, 1959

The meeting took place on 4 and 5 April, 1959, at the office of the Khadi Commission, an autonomous body financed by the Union Government, for the production and sale of this handspun and hand-woven material. This facility was natural, partly because of Annasaheb's long connection with this activity. The Chairman of the Commission was, however, Vaikunthbhai Mehta, whose long and deep experience in working with official administrations in India was invaluable to the Koraput group's necessities.

The members were as follows; the names of those who contribute to this Memorial volume are in italics:

> P. N. Bajelkar; K. R. Datye; *Vaikunthbhai Mehta;* A. D. Pabaney; Manubhai Pancholi; Javerbhai Patel; *R. K. Patil; Annasaheb W. Sahasrabudhe; Evelyn Wood; Maurice Zinkin;* and, of course — Nagin Parekh.

There was far too much material to be digested at a two-day meeting of this kind. Besides the papers supplied in advance, more material was brought to and distributed at the meeting, and further additions were made at the time of minuting the discussions. It was difficult to see the principal issues which should have had priority in discussion, more particularly because of differing points of view which appeared in the advance papers.

Most of these documents were neither dated nor signed. They evidently represented progressive discussions in Koraput, beginning with Mr. Dey's January visit and proceeding with

P. N. Bajelkar is an agricultural expert, and was in charge of the Kasturba Farm, at Indore.

K. R. Datye is an engineer, who had worked in the Koraput Project.

A. D. Pabaney is a social worker, with a broad interest in research.

Manubhai Pancholi is Principal of Lok-Bharata, an institution for training teachers for rural development, at Sanosara in Saurashtra (peninsular Gujerat).

Javerbhai Patel is an experienced Sarvodaya worker.

the lesser dignitaries of the Government of Orissa, but no lower, I think, than the Development Commissioner. Three rather distinct starting-points towards the agreement to be reached were consequently before the meeting.

On the one hand, the impersonal government aspect was expressed; and its unwillingness to cede any administrative power was, as is doubtless necessary, carefully covered by officialese. Since this is a written style which always seems either to evade direct statement, or to provide cover for intentions which are not made clear, this editor must plead a consistent inability to get a picture from it which could be used to construct a working arrangement. Details are certainly not lacking, but they never seem to be filled out with explanations which can convey their implications to those who do not regularly use this form of written communication.

On the other hand, the ABSSS papers also showed wide differences. Annasaheb's view ranged over the broader aspects of planning, and summarized the means much more briefly. Nagin's own proposals were of a far more detailed order. He had the modern weakness of requiring evidence and analysis to support every statement or projection.

In any case, all these advance working-papers were put forward at the last moment. Hence it was inevitable that their theses should overlap and that one paper should contradict another in several details. It may be added that Nagin agreed with the comments just made, which are condensed from correspondence exchanged during that period.

The following major points have emerged from subsequent analysis as the principal subjects for discussion.

In January, Annasaheb, the Union C.D. Minister and the Orissa State's Development Commissioner and Chief Secretary discussed possible means by which the experienced idealism of the ABSSS and the official programme for rural development Minister might be brought into working co-operation. These three, each supposedly complete, propositions can be summarized; but to do so, the following quotations repeat

(in italics) the phraseology of the official confirmation of the discussions. This may suggest to the reader who is unacquainted with it how the official style confuses both detail and policy issues.

(*a*) *ABSSS will "assure full executive . ."* (why not take) ". . responsibility" for a *programme for a population of about 25,000 in Boipariguda Thana*). Some *other party would provide the necessary funds*. (One must presume that the "other party" meant either the Union or State Government, or both.)

(*b*) As a *quid pro quo*, in Kalyansingpur Block, the ABSSS would try working a "*scheme of voluntary co-operation*" by "*a non-official agency with the C.P.* (Community Projects) *Administration.*" (This could mean either the State's C.D. Administration, or the Union Government's Ministry of C.D.).

Apparently, these two proposals were initially discussed by Mr. Dey, who left the impression that he would much prefer that they should be taken together; but that he would not necessarily insist upon this condition.

The third proposal put forward at the meeting was raised by an official negotiating on behalf of Orissa State. It must be made clear that he was not present, but his proposal was expressed on paper, *in extenso*:—

(*c*) The official Control of the *Extension* (sic) *Block* . . . be supplemented by the Sarva Seva Sangh by its work in the panchayats, the co-operatives, mahila samities etc. . . . representative of the . . . Sangh would be the Chairman of the Block Development Committee.

The third proposal was barely discussed at the Bombay Meeting, as it was soon agreed to be wholly unworkable.

The minutes of the 4-5 April meeting were very thorough; and its total paperage totalled nearly fifty sheets, including a useful record of discussions between Annasaheb and D. R. Gadgil on 8 April. Annasaheb's notes recall the core of all the advice offered to the ABSSS by the outside participants: that "unless there is clear understanding and specific agreement

between the parties, binding them to the period of the scheme — say five to seven years — the new venture should not be taken up by the Sarva Seva Sangh."

Annasaheb's notes continue by admitting that this advice was wise, but that it somehow got lost during the further process of negotiation in Orissa. It seems to this editor that the undoubtedly wrong action which the ABSSS took by embarking on a Project with "only a general approval of its scheme" was due to two factors. Both of these hang upon Nagin's eagerness to run the Project, when it was the last remaining outpost of the ABSSS in Koraput.

Firstly, Nagin's inexperience, combined with his essentially trusting attitude towards all other human beings, caused him to be misled by Government, as an impersonal body. Secondly, he felt very strongly that, having brought fresh prospects before the people of the area, the ABSSS and he himself were responsible to support them in their working out of their own development.

Among other specific counsel which Nagin obtained from the participants to the Bombay meeting, a letter from Vaikunthbhai Mehta to him, dated 30 April, 1959 seems to have covered all the necessary detail required to make a firm working arrangement with governmental associates. If Nagin had used, besides gratefully accepting this succinct advice, which was also a guide to operation within the government machine, the Project which he undertook might have been working today, instead of having died with him. These were the most essential of all the detailed prescriptions furnished by the Bombay meeting; but they evidently got submerged in the spate of paper detail which subsequently accumulated.

7. JOINT DEFINING OF THE BOIPARIGUDA PILOT PROJECT

The six months' period after the Bombay meeting, before Nagin

and his group undertook the Project, are summarized by Annasaheb as follows:—

"After some exchange of views and more details, the Sarva Seva Sangh partially accepted the Government's proposal. The Sangh agreed to run a Development Block.[15] It was Nagin and his group of workers at Limbaguda who were the natural choice for shouldering this responsibility."

"The objectives and approach set before this Pilot Project were as follows:[16]

1. To raise the living standard of the economically poorer and socially weaker sections of the community, by providing them with regular and permanent self-employment in agriculture, industry, forest exploitation, or services and professions.

2. To activize local organizations, specially the *panchayats*, the co-operatives and the schools. These three organizations were to become the principal agencies of development.

3. To achieve an organic and balanced development of a geographical region through the development of agricultural, mineral, forest and such other resources of the area."

Annasaheb, negotiating for the ABSSS, visualized three phases in which to complete such a programme. He made a note for

[15] At this stage it was not fully clear if a standard C.D. Block, of about 60,000 population; or a tribal Development Block of (in this case) about 25,000 — was the joint intention. One must assume that the latter was in Annasaheb's mind when writing this note. In any case he was thinking of an experiment in development, to act as a pilot operation which would provide guidance in similar conditions elsewhere.

[16] The projected aims, data and undertakings outlined in these extracts from Annasaheb's account can be compared with Nagin's "*Boipariguda Pilot Project . . .*" *op. cit;* This long document describes how the experiment took its actual course.

Government detailing each of these phases, from which the following is an extract:—

"The *first phase* of the programme will be confined to organizing . . . twenty-five primary unit *Panchayats* and Co-operative Grain *Golas*, and to opening up new schools. Each Grain *Gola* Co-operative Society will have the means to provide credit to the extent of Rs. 10,000/-, and it will run a Consumers' Co-operative Store. This process will be considered complete when the total primary membership of all the Grain *Gola* Societies reaches two to three thousand.

"The *second phase* will lead to the transformation of Grain *Gola* Co-operative Societies into service co-operatives; and, further, to the formation of a Union of all the co-operative societies in the Project area. The Union will undertake the dual functions of marketing and development.

"The consumer stores run by the Grain *Gola* Co-operative Societies in their respective *panchayat* areas will then either be linked directly with the Marketing Union, or these stores will act as local agents of the Union. In addition to acting as a central purchasing and sales agency, the Union will be helped to take up all the responsibilities of (economic) development in the area. If it works well, the Union will be able to have a gross annual turnover of about five lakhs of rupees."

"This result will, however, be conditioned by the progress made in increasing the agricultural production of the region. Unless the total agricultural output is doubled by means of Extension and soil-conservation programmes, this figure of five lakhs is not likely to be attained."

"Judging from the present resources in personnel, these two phases together will take about five years. During this period it should be possible to train up a cadre of about two hundred workers who will be in a position to run *panchayats* and service co-operatives, labour-contract societies and forest-produce societies, schools and health units, with a fair degree of efficiency.[17]

"The *third phase* may then begin with a programme of intensive cultivation in every village, and with the setting up of a few model co-operative or collective villages. These villages can come up more successfully in regions where irrigation and other natural facilities can be easily developed. In case the agricultural potentialities are limited, it should be possible to turn in yet another direction by taking to processing industries and forest industries."

An overall scheme was provided which detailed a total budget of Rs. 32,29,500/- for a period of six years from October 1959 to September 1965. The main emphasis of the whole programme was on co-operatives and collective land-settlements of *adivasi* families on available wasteland in the area. These two programmes were allotted Rs. 10,33,500/- and Rs. 8,30,000/- respectively. Education was allotted another Rs. 2,02,500/-.

The translation of these generalized, wide *and flexible* objectives into Government's budgeting style must have been an immense task. It seems plain commonsense that no one can predict the expenditure for five or six years under a minimum of 29 different heads of development activity.[18] Obviously, each step forward depends upon the progress willingly made by the people for whose benefit the expenditure is required. It is of course equally understandable that Government must be able to see its *probable* expenditures in the future.

Difficulties only come up when the total amount requires redistribution in a given period; or when the funds assigned to an early period are to be spent in a later one. Such adjustments require a flexibility and willingness to see the need for realistic adjustments. These characteristics seem to have been practically

[17] For professional exigencies, the editor is obliged to express his complete personal dissent from the time-prediction here expressed by Annasaheb. The Project was finally planned on a budget spread over six to seven years; and this, in the editor's view, is likewise a fraction of the period required.

[18] Parekh, Nagin: *Boiparigada Pilot Project*, *op. cit.*

non-existent within the Orissa Government's machine.

Effects of the Bombay Meeting

There was a long way to go from 5 April to 2 October 1959. It is, perhaps, possible to illustrate the course of the negotiations by quoting from some of Nagin's letters to the editor.

On 21 April 1959, Nagin wrote of a sympathetic officer in the State Administration, that he had

> "... suggested ... it would be far better to approach directly ... C.D. Ministry and persuade them to take up this Block as a Research Pilot Block under their direct control from Delhi."

This helpful official actually warned Annasaheb not to accept working with the State Government.

On 6 June 1959 a letter from Nagin still refers to the possibility of negotiating with the Delhi Government, but these thoughts brought no results. One other point of interest was raised in this long letter:—

> "Annasaheb feels that a huge Project . . . Dandakaranya may be ... instrumental in the displacement of persons within its sphere . . . the whole of our Project Area is covered by its future area of work."

June and July were the months of concentration on the details which still needed to be cleared for data, so that plans could be realistic. Additional staff had also become a pressing problem.

On 14 July 1959, Nagin refers to the need for a stenographer! On the responsibility of the ABSSS, not the joint Project, fresh plans were also being made for a Forest development co-operative — as if they had not enough on their hands. He remarks on the impossibility (as it appears to him) of detailing a scheme when the data are not available.

By the end of July, however a budget and a detailed scheme of work, to start on 2 October, had been submitted to the State Government.

On 12 September 1959, Nagin wrote that:

"Recent administrative changes in Orissa have put the proposed Pilot Project in a doldrum. . . . We may have to start afresh . . . educating the new, and perhaps a more hostile lot of State administrators."

This is evidently the point at which Vaikunthbhai's detailed advice (page 38) should have been pressed at high levels in the State capital. It wasn't, and it seems that the personal relationships on which Nagin had relied must have become ineffective, perhaps before the Project started work.

8. *WORKING THE BOIPARIGUDA PILOT PROJECT*

There was certainly agreement on one point. The Project started work on 2 October 1959. From that date until 31 March 1961 budgets totalling Rs. 7,79,415 were approved by the Government of Orissa. There were, however, endless difficulties about securing actual funds. These are part of the difficulties referred to in a comment by Annasaheb:

"It throws a significant light on the working of the present Government machinery that, even when the schematic budget had been approved both by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, and the Government of Orissa, it took over a year for the Project to be officially notified in the Gazette.[19] Anyone who has had experience of working in the Government would appreciate the difficulty of working

[19] Nagin's letter to me dated 22 Dec. 1960, which is later quoted, makes it clear that the authority delegated and accounting procedures, were not gazetted by that date. An Indian Government's financial controls will not recognize a signatory as competent to draw or authorize payment of funds until his authority has been notified in its official Gazette.

with such an uncertain official status."

Annasaheb expresses himself more strongly on the relationships which hindered the work of the Project:

"From the first day, the working of the Project, as we (the ABSSS) understood it, became a running battle between Nagin and his group and the Government authorities. The implementation of the scheme turned out to be an exploration into the limits of a non-official development effort within the framework of our society, of which Government administration forms an important element."

The Scale of the Project

In April, the Bombay meeting had been provided with the broad facts on the area of the Project, and the people. These particulars had been collected by Nagin from the last months of 1958, when the limits of the Projects were first outlined. They differ substantially from the area for which the Project was finally assigned.

The latter figures show about 60% increase in population over Nagin's original presentation. None of the records available are clear about when Government changed its overall assignment. Doubtless the reason for the change was to keep the whole of the administrative area based on Boipariguda within the same development pattern. The ABSSS expectations of April 1959 and the Project's assignment of October 1959 are tabulated for comparison on page 45.

	as first estimated		*assigned*
	Project Area	*Whole Area*	*Project Area*
Square miles	238	415	390
Panchayats	three	seven	five
Villages	191*	—	127*
Population	25,188 (1951)	42,794 (1951)	43,360 (1960†)

* The first estimate probably did not distinguish revenue villages from hamlets. The assignment may therefore include from 3 to 10 hamlets in each unit; or even more near the forest, as each hamlet often contains only one tribal group.

† From a trial household census taken in August, 1960 (compares with 33,520 in 1951 Census).

Characteristics of cultures and societies. The first estimate listed:

Tribes: Bhumiya, Rana, Porja and Kondh
Scheduled Castes: (*Harijans*) Dombs

Dura and Gadaba tribes — with the Kondhs — mostly in the hills and forests, are also mentioned in the assigned area. The "plains" villages usually contain Bhumiyas and Ranas in the same hamlet, with Porjas and Dombs living at some distance from them.

Other observations of first estimate

Literacy exceptionally low. Schools least attended by tribal children.

Demographic and economic factors from first estimate

Density of population about 100 per square mile, except for the largest *panchayat*, Ramgiri, where it was about 60 per square mile.

LIMBAGUDA ROUGH SURVEY. Approximate studies gave figures:

Gross Annual Income	*Percentages of families earning*
below Rs. 300	35%
Rs. 300 to Rs. 600	55%
above Rs. 600	10%.

Nagin therefore reckoned on 1800 families below the subsistence level at that time.

The data for the assigned area in the table are taken from Nagin's most recent record — for the period 2 October 1959

to 31 December 1960. It would not have helped to reproduce this document. It was evidently prepared to meet official requirements, and most of the information is provided in over 40 pages of tables. Written in March 1961, Nagin's views on the relative achievement in the area are quoted here. The reader will recall that, for most of the people to whom he refers, economic promotion began at least five years before these disillusioned findings were written:

> "Economic betterment has not become a felt need with the people . . . (this failure is) not due to lack of awareness of the benefits . . . of various developmental and employment programmes. They desire that their village should have a school building, a road, a pucca well, etc. . . . (but) these are looked upon as ornamental, adding to the prestige of the village. They are even less enthusiastic . . . where a change in their outlook and habits . . . and active participation at management level are the pre-requisites of success."

The Project's staff was much increased from the original group which Nagin had collected at Limbaguda. The total number, in March 1961, was 65 persons, of whom 14 were ranked as Extension officers and 38 as fieldworkers.

The Project's Three Obstacles

Besides its failure to provide the Project with an official status, and Nagin with official authority — especially financial, the State Government failed to honour three of its chief undertakings to the ABSSS. These are more fully described by Annasaheb. The following abstracts from his notes:—

> Three undertakings were made by the Government:—
>
> 1. The political organization of the area would be modified as a first operation of the ABSSS Project. Any *panchayats* covering larger unit populations than 1000 would be reconstructed into smaller *panchayats*.
>
> 2. From the Government's side one definite undertaking was to hand over the schools in the area and the administrative service for those schools to the ABSSS.

3. The development staff were to be controlled by Nagin for the ABSSS. Therefore, only Government's Revenue and Police officials would continue to work in the Project Area. The technical Service Departments of Government (Agriculture, Forests, Engineering and Health) would presumably be on call by the Project, though there is no record of a clear arrangement on this point.

None of these three points of agreement was honoured by the Government of Orissa up to the time of Nagin's death, over three years after the nominal start of the Project.

PANCHAYATS:

On the matter of the re-organized *panchayats*, Government changed its mind three times in this period. At first, the official postponement of the undertaking was attributed to a decision for re-organization of *panchayats* as small units throughout the State of Orissa. The ABSSS Project was working on this revised understanding, in anticipation of a Government notification of its decision. Without any warning, however, a sudden decision was made by Government to introduce *Panchayati Raj*[20] as a "crash programme".

The importance of these switches to the people will be clear from reference to the tabulated data. One cannot change official working arrangements from dealing with about 1200 households in a unit to about 200 — or vice versa — without causing extensive local adjustments within the groups. Social, economic and political relationships must all be affected.

[20] A *Panchayat* is a group of persons who are responsible for the common affairs of a community. By tradition, membership of the panchayat was hereditary, or appointed by the consensus of a group linked entirely by continguity, social status or occupation.

Panchayati Raj is a form of local self-government in which the *panchayat* members are elected by ballot. It is linked with and exercises powers delegated to it by a State Government. The next body above the *panchayat* on the new hierarchic ladder is the *Panchayat Samiti*. This is where Government grants, loans and services are apportioned to each village in one Development Block.

The consequence of these administrative uncertainties, swept away by a sudden decision to take entirely different action, was, of course, disastrous to the relationship which had been carefully cultivated between the Project staff and the people of the area. For nearly a year, the ABSSS group had made propaganda with the people in favour of smaller *panchayats*. This promotion, which the ABSSS confidently believed to be supported by Government, had two effects.

The persons exercising power in the existing, large *panchayats*, were thoroughly unnerved by the prospect of losing their comfortable positions of power. As soon as Government abandoned the plan for smaller *panchayats*, these vested interests were of course led to believe that they had been deceived by the ABSSS development organization.

Furthermore, the strong men of the large *panchayats* probably felt that they could make even more powerful positions for themselves out of the sudden introduction of *Panchayati Raj*. Naturally then, they were encouraged by this series of Government actions to adopt a fresh attitude of defiance and hostility towards the ABSSS staff.

SCHOOLS

On the matter of schools, one may perhaps condone Government's inability to fulfil their undertaking on the grounds that the officials concerned were deficient in the communications essential to administrative competence. No such lenient view can be taken of the official performance with regard to *panchayats*. It displayed a lack of social and administrative responsibility towards the people of the Project Area, besides negligence of undertakings made to the development team there.

The principle behind the Government's offer to hand over schools to the Project and the ABSSS's acceptance of the offer was part of an extensively discussed agreement to introduce new systems of teaching; and, eventually, teachers chosen by the ABSSS. The teachers chosen might possibly be those who were

already *in situ*, after they had taken some re-training.

It had been clearly understood that teachers finally appointed by the ABSSS Project would undertake additional duties besides their normal academic jobs. They would hold adult education classes. Each teacher would act as secretary and accountant of the village co-operative; and he would take an active part in *panchayat* affairs. For these additional jobs each teacher was to be paid extra. In all, he was expected to earn up to Rs. 70 or 75 per month. On this salary, the Project would have been able to employ teachers with better qualifications.

The Government machinery, quite simply, failed to catch up with the change which was contemplated. Although the Education Department was officially requested by the ABSSS to hand over the schools, according to the agreement reached, it would neither accede to this request nor instruct the Inspector of Schools for the District to work in collaboration with the Project. This deadlock was never resolved. The Project was not even able to assemble the teachers from this area so as to put its propositions before them.

No instructions were received from his superiors by the District Inspector of Schools; and the latter was neither willing to use his own initiative; nor as seemed even more unreasonable, to request instructions from a higher level in his own department.

STAFF POSTING

It appeared that the Project continued to be administered by the Government of Orissa through its Tribal and Rural Welfare Department. Evidently the Community Development Department of the same Government was completely unaware of the Project's existence.

This interesting confusion between two sections of Government was dramatized one morning by a notification from the local administrator, below the District level, that "a Shadow Block" had been created for the Boipariguda area. This notification named the officer appointed to take charge of it. A visit to the Collector ultimately corrected this error.

After the "Shadow Block" officer vanished, staff sanctioned for this non-existent organization continued to be appointed, and intimations of the individuals posted were received by the Project by letter. More visits to the Collector put these further errors right.

The Central Problem: Authority and Funds:

As might have been expected, the principal trouble was in obtaining funds to operate the Project. From 2 October 1959 to 31 March 1961, Nagin could only obtain funds by a process of constant personal applications. This time-wasting process, which often caused him to take the long journey to the State Capital, was certainly continued till the end of 1960. On 22 December 1960, a letter from Nagin said:

> "We are planning to convene the meeting of the Committee of Direction for the Project on 7 January. It much depends upon what is decided in the meeting and also on the receipt of further funds from the Government. As usual we are facing bankruptcy and I may have to run up to Bhubaneshwar to see if I cannot with 'force' persuade them to give some money."

Annasaheb writes that, after 31 March 1961, "the Pilot Project received no funds, and the activities . . . gradually tailed off." He explains how they kept going by using non-Government funds.

Before the Pilot Project began, the ABSSS had started a Forest Labour Co-operative Society which was operating on a margin of about Rs. 1,53,000 until 2 October 1959. This Co-operative Society was taken over as a responsbility of the Project Staff. The margins then ran at about Rs. 80,000 during Nagin's period of operation. The recurring expenses of the Pilot Project were met out of this margin. No further funds, after 31 March 1959, were received by the Project from Government, up to 30 June 1964.

Annasaheb adds that the ABSSS is now asking the Government of Orissa to make good a shortfall on these margins, which

amounts to Rs. 1,25,000, and to hand over all the assets to the Forest Labour Co-operative Society, which was duly registered in 1963.

Government Financial Methods

An interesting light is thrown on the sense of responsibility for public money in financing operations of Governments in India, by the method of providing funds to back the credit of the Project's official Co-operative Societies. Within the total six year budget of over Rs. 32,00,000, a sum of about Rs. 8,20,000 was to be provided for loans, which the Project would assign to the Co-operative Societies which it took over and promoted. The gross amount of this loan fund, to provide the Co-operatives with adequate working capital, had to be backed by either the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, or the Orissa State Government. Neither Government was willing to stand surety for the amount on loan.

The aspect of responsibility for public money arose as follows. Either Government was willing to sanction the whole amount as an outright grant. Annasaheb writes: "This may have been a convenient way of spending money for Government; but the Project could not possibly accede to this form of finance."

It would obviously have been an irresponsible action to make a gift of such large amounts towards the working capital of local Co-operative Societies, which had not, at that time, acquired sufficient experience to be responsible for funds on this scale. Perhaps this instance sufficiently illustrates how official rules and procedures, by their intent to prevent waste of public money, can in fact cause that waste to be authorized.

THE PROJECT'S OFFICIAL STATUS

One result of the negotiations between the State and the Union Governments about Co-operative loans was to obliterate the distinct status of the Pilot Project. The Union Ministry of Home Affairs finally rejected any responsibility for providing funds

on the grounds that its population records did not show the required qualifications of the Project Area as a Tribal Development Block.

The Government of Orissa was therefore compelled to sanction funds for the Project as if it were an ordinary Community Development Block. In the process of this involvement, the initial joint agreement got swept aside. The status of the Pilot Project had been clearly agreed to be that of a research-and-action unit, of an experimental kind.

Possibly the sudden introduction of *Panchayati Raj* brought in fresh officials at State Level with new responsibilities for development, but no knowledge of the Pilot Project's purposes. At any rate, Annasaheb writes that ". . . it became clear that, after *Panchayati Raj* had been inaugurated, the Government considered the Project should operate like any other Development Block. The only way in which it differed from the official Blocks was that the personnel was to be non-official."

"At the time of Nagin's death, this confusion was still not cleared. Nagin had patiently been working for more than two years to salvage something of the original image of the Project. Looking back on it, the tragic truth stands out that in this struggle Nagin was alone." It may be added here that, so long as Nagin maintained his personal relationship with the District Collector, local adjustments were always possible. For that matter, Nagin's personal relationships with the high officials of the State, which were excellent, were an equally irreplaceable support to the Project.

Without those relationships at both levels it would not have been possible even to work through the first period of the Project up to the recorded date of December 1960. In fact, even though funds ceased to be contributed by Government to the Project from 31 March 1961, both sides were still making attempts to carry on until Nagin's death in November 1961.

It must be remembered that however friendly and sympathetic Government officials were, as individuals, they were also part of an administration, which limited their activities and imposed

on them the formulae of habit, the ways and methods of administrative machinery. However, Annasaheb says that "none of his working group was ever as sympathetic to and tolerant of the ways of administration as Nagin. Towards the end, even he got tired and exasperated by the way in which the Administration blindly struggled along, impervious to the realities of people's lives."

9. *ANALYSIS OF THE NECESSARY ATTITUDES FOR DEVELOPMENT*

The balance of Annasaheb's notes on the working out of the Pilot Project is particularly illuminating; and goes to confirm Nagin's original belief that the fundamental necessity before undertaking a planned development effort was to establish a thorough mutual understanding between all concerned in it. Annasaheb's notes make an analysis of the Project's relations with four groups participating in the area's development: Government; persons with local politico-economic power, the people, and the Development Agency personnel.

THE LOCAL "LEADERS". The mood of the local leaders became hostile to the idea of *Gramdan* during Nagin's period of work from Limbaguda. Ultimately, all efforts for the equitable redistribution of land had to be abandoned. When the same group which had worked for *Gramdan* was to be in charge of the Government's Development Block, naturally these local "leaders" were stirred to greater enmity.

Probably because of the strength of their personal rage and disappointment, they could not be persuaded that the Pilot Project Staff, which contained so many members of the original Limbaguda group, had now given up its promotion of distributing the land, according to *Gramdan* principles. They could

not believe that the new scheme was a more comprehensive plan for development of the area. These "leaders" were in fact determined to distrust Nagin and his colleagues.

For quite a few months from the Project's start in October 1959, they kept quiet, because they saw that local officials were on the side of the ABSSS workers. But when the Project's activities began to work out directly with the people, and these "leaders" did not get their accustomed pecuniary benefits, they became more furious. It was not only the denial of their profits and their commissions which upset them. Among them were petty contractors, who found that the Project was strict in enforcing specifications. It insisted on a minimum quality of work done, as defined in the contract. These contractors therefore refused to work for the Project. The job was taken up directly by the staff, and this roused even greater fury.

LOCAL OFFICIALS. The negative attitude of the local officials in the Education Department has already been described. Annasaheb is unable to assign any particular reason why most of the local Revenue and Police officials should have adopted a hostile attitude towards the Project. They were, however, certainly interested enough to make all the enquiries which they could, to find out what was the strength of Project's backing from high-level officials in the State. It appears that, until this was clear to them, they were entirely negative towards the Project staff.

As soon as they realized, however, that the Project had a very tenuous official status, they took up an open attitude of hostility. They expressed this by encouraging the local "leaders" to be intransigent, defiant, and non-cooperative with the Project staff. This change of the officials from a negative to a hostile attitude seems to have originated with the Police, who were said to have had early and direct evidence of opposition to the Project by higher authorities in the State Government.

POLITICAL PRESSURES. When the Project was getting under way, preparations were being made for a general election. The political parties in the State began to look for issues by

which they could attach themselves to the local "leaders". It was probably clear to the higher-level political bosses that the Congress Party's leadership in the State had cooled off towards the Project. It seemed therefore easy for the local political workers to come out openly against the Project, and thus to obtain the support of the local "leaders", with a prospect of obtaining the votes which they could influence.

Towards the end of 1960, a regular campaign was launched to throw out both the Sarva Seva Sangh and the Project from the District. This campaign had the open support of the local Congress Party and the tacit approval of the local officials. The campaign somewhat abated when, in mid-1961, fresh news arrived that a new Ministry which had taken charge was favourable to the Project.

This editor can add to this abstract of Annasaheb's notes. During a three-hour discussion in Bombay on 10 October 1960, of which detailed notes were kept, Nagin said that the pressures on him were becoming more openly political. High-level political animosities within the Congress Party in Orissa had caused the collection of local "complaints" (obviously part of the local campaign to which Annasaheb refers). The Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D.) had been ordered to examine these complaints, and its agents were therefore harassing the Project staff.

It must be added that Nagin wrote on 17 July 1961 (his last letter to the editor) to say that a new Congress Chief Minister's installation would, he thought "definitely improve things for us." It does not, however, seem as if much improvement in Government relations with the Project in general — or Nagin in particular — could have been effective by 19 November 1961.

THE PEOPLE. Nagin's own impression of the people's attitude has already been quoted. It seems obvious that they had not had time to understand the implications of development, largely because of the struggles — of which they must have been aware — between their non-official benefactors and the officials. It must be remembered that tribal people, even after the first

generations of settlement as peasant farmers, are all too often troubled by their long memories. In Southern Orissa, their memories are without doubt filled with regret for their former state of primitive contentment, and the decline from it into which they have been drawn by the "colonists'" promises.

When these people first saw that Nagin and his staff made few promises, but had real intentions of lifting the oppression which ground them into lives of increasing restriction and poverty, they must have begun to hope again. But their hopes could not have lasted. The local combination of impersonal officials and ruthless political or economic bosses seemed to be coming on top again. Nagin and his helpful efforts were likely to be swept away; all the people could see was a return to the same state as before, or worse.

It would of course be known that families who had received benefits from Nagin's group had imbibed some of their ideas about freedom through self-development. Therefore such families should beware of heavier pressure by landlords, money-lenders and officials — possibly even traders. This prognosis may not have been sound, but it is practically sure that it was the basic thinking in people's minds. Therefore Annasaheb's label of "apathy" and Nagin's sole judgement that they had not grasped the aim of self-development may well have been mistaken.

What was the use of making further efforts for improvement, if the benefits accrued by them were all to be stripped from them once again?

THE PROJECT STAFF. As Nagin himself was only too ready to admit, his colleagues had not reached a stage of sufficiently deep understanding of and free communication with the people. Annasaheb ascribes this in part to the heavy load of work upon everyone in the development cadre, and partly to the unsettled state caused by the many indecisions and hostilities which surrounded them. They certainly had no time to deal with officials and local politicians, and could not have exercised Nagin's skill in doing so.

10. CONCLUSION

Annasaheb expresses the strong opinion that the programme of work for the Project, although apparently very detailed, was in fact quite insufficiently planned. He remarks that parts of the budgeted programme were "conventional, bodily lifted from the C.D. Block pattern"; another part "expressed fanciful ideas, and the remaining part was the real core of the scheme." In Annasaheb's opinion, the programme represented a gross overload upon the staff employed, since he remarks that "settlement of landless *adivasis* . . . on wasteland was one major project . . . (which) would have required the full-time energies of the whole group for successful implementation." He adds that "this scheme was only marginally related to the . . . development of the area."

Annasaheb's other, principal criticism of the Pilot Project concerns the inadequacy of its staff. He observes that none of the personnel had joined the Project for personal gain. The motive was invariably that of working for the people. Nevertheless, the imported staff regarded the *adivasis* as "uncultured, stupid and second-class citizens." Members of the staff who had these views considered it their job to civilize and modernize the *adivasis*; and consequently "the only way to work for them was to order them about and manage them."

As a result of this attitude and the easy response from the people, the development workers were inclined to become "self-righteous, high-handed and indifferent" in their dealings with *adivasis*. Ultimately, the group as a whole was found to be "explosively critical" of the people, and particularly of their leaders.

> "Nagin was the focal point. He had to bear the full burden. The staff depended upon his repeated visits to the District headquarters and the State capital, so that no understanding of Government's ways ever came clear to them. Nagin had to learn the art of diplomacy. He learnt to be politely thankful and pleasant "even when cold water was thrown in his face."

He also had to meet the hostility of the local politico-economic interests. Here again, he was the focus, and he had to "control this hostility, which he did with consummate skill." On the internal front of the Project, Nagin was the arbiter in all disputes. He had the "thankless and killing job of keeping every worker satisfied."

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM NAGIN?

It is a privilege, which might be useful, to add an editorial tag to Annasaheb's conclusions. The reader who is concerned with rural development in any of the new nations may find that the editor's reflections from Nagin's experience contain something constructive. We are all aiming at the same target; to enable peasants or other, formerly isolated, social groups to meet the wider world which will otherwise swamp them.

Nagin's experience is certainly extreme, if not unique. The man himself was an immense force of gentle insistence. His mind and its interests, combined with this strong character, made him a first-class man for the job. Perhaps because he lacked experience and specialized training, his passion for learning the truth was largely satisfied more by the tribal people for whom he worked, and less by books.

His early death has dramatized the conflict between the cultivation of individuals in traditional societies and the ruthless impersonality of development patterns on a national scale. Many of us dislike such patterns. We must, however, remember that ruthlessness and impersonality also characterize the wider world for which we are trying to prepare the tribal and peasant people.

The foregoing pages reveal the extremes on the part of both the development agencies concerned. It is unlikely that so idealistic a principle as *Gramdan*, and such ineptitude, plus unwillingness to work with its adherents on the part of a Government will often be found elsewhere. In twenty years of similar efforts this editor has, however met many examples of conflict between the large-scale government development programme and a

non-official team. These conflicts are not confined to the developing countries. Yet the same aims are undoubtedly shared.

What goes wrong? Why are the more profound groups of non-official professionals so rarely able to make even satisfactory experiments? When they do, why are their successful methods so incompletely used by the government machine for development? Nagin's experience first shows up an extreme case of one error into which we are all inclined to fall. The plans made, even for a small area, always call for "too much in too little time."

Destructive Waste in Excessive Programmes

Let us examine this last proposition in a more general context. The policy-maker in a democratic Government depends on votes for his power to make plans. To meet what he conceives as the popular demand, the politician in power, in a "new democracy" feels that he must present a glowing transformation-scene in the countryside. The recurrence of elections holds him down to a time-limit, say of a Five Year Plan.

The officials in his administration are far more experienced. They know that his vague sketch covers an immense and detailed picture of benefits for rural people. On the other hand, they know that such improvements, and more production from the land cannot be achieved in the time. Yet, once the Big Man has made his announcements of what will be done, they cannot whittle down the programme to fit their more realistic view.

The "targets" set for achievement in a Plan period are therefore always in excess of any possible — and thorough — attainment. If the difficulties which will arise in the small societies of the rural areas are thought of at this stage, they are considered as stereotypes. We have learnt, in India, how slowly these vague generalizations get adapted to very different regional patterns.

The economic basis of National Planning always masks the very fact that the effort is to help in a transition of small societies from traditional, isolated ways of life to intimate association

with a modernized, fast-changing world. The villager takes time to realize the menace to his low-level security which that world presents. The Plan cannot provide for the hard mental as well as physical work which is ahead of the unsuspecting peasant.

Nor can Planning yet forecast the development of people's attitudes, skills and knowledge; and hence their new relationships with their old neighbours, let alone those with the new neighbours forced on them by improved communications. The time for this development is utterly unpredictable by any known scientific method.

The best that any Planning organization could achieve would be an experienced guess in forecasting achievements of any kind within a time-limit. The forecast is no easier when the rural participants are a people of fairly homogeneous character and values in a restricted region. A non-scientific administrator from such an area would quite likely make a better guess.

We just don't know enough about people and their interactions to make plans with set targets. Perhaps the most unpredictable of all the factors is the fertility of the relationships to be created (or improved) between the two active groups in development. The people and the fieldworkers are both unknown from the point of view of learning from each other.

It is unlikely that anyone with some scientific education and more experience in this kind of development will dispute the preceding two paragraphs. Some may disagree with the proposition that the result of all loose projections with fixed, physical aims is inevitably an excess of effort for the results accomplished. The waste of funds and material resources which such excess implies may be made up by international assistance of one form or another. The waste of human effort is destructive; enthusiasm and devotion cannot be so simply replaced.

Wherever the true aim of rural self-development is pressed, we have therefore one lesson to learn first. Any programme must be flexible, and subject to change when village-people are discovered to need different priorities, more time, and perhaps

even quite different improvements, as *they* see them. Targets must always be provisional, and used as a framework for the fieldworkers' exploration and persuasion.

Most of us with field-experience are aware of this necessary design in a general way. Nagin's story throws a strong light on the details of local obstructions to putting the design into practice. There are, consequently, more fundamental lessons to be learnt from his experience.

The Transitions of Power

The insistence on filling pre-arranged targets carries other dangers. This development pattern always demands too much of the fieldworker, or presupposes too easy acceptance of the targets by rural people. In a "new democracy" a development fieldworker from an outside agency must always disturb traditional relationships in small areas.

The very core of rural development today is the formation of new relationships. The fieldworker can help villagers with those which extend into the world far beyond the old, closed communities. Villagers have to work out their new local relationships for themselves. The most that any outsider can do to help is by telling stories of how other farming countries grew into new patterns of mutual dependence.

Perhaps the best starting point for this — in India — might be to point out the way in which the cycle and the motor-bus, radio and cinema have made people realize the effects of the new forces of mechanization and mobility.

Machines give men more power to produce, to learn and to enjoy life. Machines bring far more men together, so that everyone has to deal with many others whom he never gets to know thoroughly. The old personal relationships, in which everything can be adjusted, are of no more use then. Government is a standing example of this change! Machines demand more effort and more care from people. If you are taking milk for sale in the town on a cycle, its chain may break. You can't argue with

the machine; you have to mend it, and look after it better in future.

Lastly, when a man works with people he doesn't know as neighbours — which must happen in a factory — he has to keep to clock-time with them. Otherwise their time, and the machine's time is wasted. As the whole organization of working together depends on saving time, its benefits are lost by being late. Sun-time and personal time become useless.

The power-structure of the traditional, closed community breaks down in a machine-age. People have either to achieve more individual independence, or accept dependence on an impersonal Welfare State. It seems to this editor a cruel insult to put this latter aim before interested peasants.

In any case the security offered by the peasant-society was very tenuous. At its most liberal, tradition required neither social superiors to share their authority with inferiors, nor richer families to do more for the poor than to make up their bare subsistence. Their situation was only alleviated by the recognition of everyone as a unique person.

Community Development cannot be hurried; it depends on the transformation of their relationships by the people who live together. No outsider or temporary member can do more than advise — if he be asked.

The concept of working together for a common prosperity, which moves towards equality, is very seldom found, even among tribal communities. It looks as if peasants can form new communities, or regenerate old ones, only upon the initiative of those individuals who are the earliest to seek and apply innovations.

To go on waiting for an Extension service to bring the innovations is just transferring the dependence to an outside, impersonal agency. The few villagers who find out both what they want and what they can do better will be the new wielders of real — as distinct from political — power. These are the ones with whom a development agency must work. They are the likely diffusers of improvements, eventually the innovators.

To find them, and use them, the fieldworker from an outside development agency often has to disturb the old values and the local balance of power. The less conservative men in the better-off peasant families are always the quickest to see two advantages for themselves in his proposals. They can get more power by being the first to adopt improved practices.

They may not want economic gain, but social or political (faction) power is always a motive. Better still, as they see it, they can retain their present power, and shift their responsibility for the economic support of the poorer families, to whom they are tied by tradition, on to the shoulders of the development agency. This happened to the ABSSS, as a response to its promotion of its work-for-wages programme. "Government" is, of course always fair game. The traditional idea of its unlimited resources dies hard.

This trend can be countered by a development programme which is not loaded with fixed targets. The fieldworker can then spend more time in cultivating the less-promising families in a village. The few individuals with practical initiative often prove the Law of Averages by more frequent appearance in families of low status. Poor families, which seem apathetic about improved practices, may be stimulated by the example of the better-off, who are nearly always quicker off the mark.

But, as will be suggested in a moment, there is great danger in this strategy. Such examples from the relatively rich families can only remove one obstacle; it is still just as essential for the conservative or poor family to find its own motives and self-confidence for the change.

Within the lowest orders of a peasant society, the development worker's job is often less complex. Their burning need for better status drives them to take more risks. They can be tackled in groups of several families together. Nagin was on the right track, there.

Unless this more cautious strategy is practised by a development agency, its fieldworkers will be driven, by multiplication of targets, to rely on the first-comers as the diffusion-points in

a village. This is how the opportunities for increased power tend to be snapped up by those who are adventurous, ready to abandon old values, and already powerful. Among these, less scrupulous characters, with the least concern for their neighbours' welfare, all too often predominate.

Exploding the Noble Peasant Myth

It is unreasonable to expect "public spirit" from already powerful rural people. They risk losing their comfortable positions of authority, for which they have often put in hard work on intrigue and factioneering, if not physical labour. They are now brought into constant contact with other — as it seems to them — much more facile human instruments of impersonal authority, e.g. Government or Big Business. Is it surprising that the "innocent" peasant covets the social, economic and political power of his new friends from outside? To him, they may well appear to be very slightly better equipped than himself (if that) for their much greater rewards.

The multiplication of the less desirable go-getters in a rural area is positively caused by the multiplication of development targets. Each target provides another opportunity for the climber. There are thus many persons of this kind to become mutual contestants for power — and much wider power than in a single village. When local self-government arrives, it provides the setting for a struggle in which each of these characters aims to serve his local interests, and those of his faction. National development objectives are thus practically ignored.

This situation is already well developed in many other parts of India, and has been attested by the intensive studies of social scientists as well as this editor's observations. Nagin's experience did not go further than to reveal the intensity of both the desire for new powers and the clinging to old powers. Actions driven by these feelings were the chief instruments in wrecking his Project.

With the properly limited resources for rural development, the increased and new powers of unscrupulous and relatively

prosperous persons will increase or even create socio-economic oppression, with or without outside political backing. At the same time, with India's villages now opened to the outside world, the relative poverty and self-persuaded helplessness of their majorities become a constant and painful awareness of their social inferiority. Surely we can deduce from this an absolute need for spreading development to provide technical or professional satisfactions as much as economic improvement?

Once again, the fresh clarity in this view is due to Nagin. He had an extraordinary freedom from the desire to exercise power in any form. Even the pressures which he could exert on others by using his outstanding mental equipment and stock were unnoticeable. His concern was wholly with sharing and persuading others to work towards a joint aim together with him.

Suggestions for a move towards Control

This editor views the Pilot Project's failure as Nagin's success. His capacity for scientific method, his compromising practice, patience and strong character made him stick to the development of the poorest people as a first care. In that process, the very fact of his superior aims and method made him enemies, who were collectively powerful enough to wreck the Project.

In that process, however, Annasaheb's practice of truthful recording has shown up the immense strength of the opposition to development at its lowest levels. Similar opposition is also clearly shown to have come from high political levels within the State — again motivated by personal desires for power, as illustrated by the anti-Nagin campaign for rural votes.

It therefore seems that one cannot rely upon any practical consideration of new rural development strategies by the only political party likely to have power in the immediate future. Yet two necessities are plain. We have already discussed why less targets and more time for true Extension work are a necessary combination. The second need is an avoidance of sudden changes in policy, such as the Orissa Government made in the matter of *panchayats*. This is already discussed (pages 47-48).

The reader need only be reminded that demoralization of very poor people, with an acute consciousness of being oppressed, is not a promising foundation for any development plans.

It might, however, be possible to introduce these strategic safeguards to rural self-development by means of the several international development agencies who contribute skilled services in the developing countries. It will obviously be necessary to verify that the same kind of adverse effects revealed by Nagin's experience are growing or are likely to grow in the respective fields of work of these service personnel. Their example and persuasion, from a wider field of knowledge, would then certainly have a stronger corrective effect than any efforts from within developing countries to press new strategies on their Governments.

If Nagin's experience provides a fractional push towards such controls, his tribesfolk will benefit. This would please him best. Some principles of control on these lines on a much wider scale would turn his death from the personal tragedy felt by the contributors to this volume into one of humanity's glorious acts of discovery.

July 1964. *Evelyn Wood.*

TRUE PROFESSIONAL HUMILITY

Two Extracts from Nagin's Correspondence

1. *From a personal letter dated Limbaguda 15th January 1958.*

.... My personal anxiety has been to prevent myself from feeling intellectually insecure, as a result of being cut off from the main stream of thought and discussion in the country.

.... The scientific attitude of mind is not in vogue here. On

the contrary, it is looked down upon by a school of thought which considers it an urban trait and therefore, automatically anti-rural! .... throughout the country the people have a feeling, and quite justified too, that *Gramdan* has failed to deliver the goods. .... What has been decided at ... Delhi is primarily a political move from both the sides. It is a face device for C.P.A. as well as *Gramdan*. Their one outstandingly common characteristic ... they have both shouted much and achieved little.

There is, however, a rather powerful section of youth in *Bhoodan* which is for non-co-operation and revolution. The next Sarvodaya Session may, therefore, well turn out to be a historic one, in the sense that the nation might see a parting of ways between the old and the new leadership in that movement.

Vinobaji has asked Anna to lead the forthcoming Sarvodaya Session, and the latter is expected to come out, in his forthright manner, with the bitter truth about *Bhoodan* and *Gramdan* ... : What has become obvious would be accepted: a retreat would be sounded: a new chapter or more than one new chapter in the life of 'Sarvodaya' would begin.

Hard facts are difficult to keep hidden for long. They have to be faced sooner or later ... Vinobaji would not have made a wiser choice of person than Anna, who should bear the blame and the blow in opening the bag with his remarkable courage and sound attitude to life. How is Anna's mind working in this critical period? Yesterday ... I met him at Vijayanagaram Station. I do not know why, but immediately on seeing him, I felt very small and ashamed in my mind. One could not help being moved by the hidden suffering of this man! He appeared to be hard as a granite and yet one could feel the strength and intensity of the hurricane raging under his breast. Anna's mind is in a state of great flux!

... (He) has nearly decided to limit the activities in Koraput. He wants Limbaguda Centre to act as one of the Pilot Projects as proposed in the latest Delhi meeting between C.P.A. and

Sarvodaya leaders.* I have agreed to . . . this experiment in a spirit of adventure and . . with a keen desire to know the truth about it.

It is not enough to say, for instance, that the co-ordination between *Gramdan* and C.P.A. will prove perilous for the former. Some of us will have to be prepared . . our own convictions and prejudices . . tested in the field of action. . . . If such a co-ordination is likely to be harmful to Sarvodaya ideas, I should like to find out through such an experiment the why of it.

2. *From Nagin's anonymized letter dated April 1958 to his colleagues in the field.*

A year's work . . . . has fairly introduced us, . . to the economic problems of this area. We have learnt at the same time that our development activity could be meaningful only to the extent that it educates local people in the ways and means of solving their problems. How naive had we been as to this process we shall also make our own education possible.

No rural worker can for long afford to rely entirely on associations and inspiration from (the) outside world. It is from the life of the people itself that he will have to draw warmth and vitality, and in it he will have to seek new avenues of education. Otherwise, he may soon lose much of his freshness and realism.

We have witnessed the ineffectiveness of our technical know-how in the absence of an appropriate village organization. Whatever be its form, unless it gets something of the character and genius of the native soil, its foundations are likely to be unstable. And really, how little do we know of the local character and its social dynamism? Aren't we still strangers to them? The *adivasi* of this area may be primitive in his ways of life, but he is certainly more balanced emotionally than his counter-

* Reference is to meetings between Mr. S. K. Dey, Minister of Community Development and his officials and the Sarvodaya leaders who were at the Mysore meeting in September, 1957.

part in the plains. How shall we help him to preserve this valuable trait while expecting him to adopt new techniques and institutions?

All this calls for a scientific attitude and infinite patience. One never can tell what lies at the end. But surely it must be a thrill to cast afresh our thinking and believe that the responsibility of bringing a new social order rests wholly on us! It was simply preposterous!

We have often inquired of this simple people about their motives in giving *Gramdan*. I wonder whether our acts, ... have been consciously directed towards guiding those fine motives to a fuller self-expression. If we have failed so far, let us at least be honest enough to admit that the cause ... lies nowhere but in our own immature understanding and faulty approach. Isn't it natural for any people to react adversely to institutions and programmes which fail to seek identification with their emotions?

.... If our motives are fair enough, we should be prepared to concede that it is the service we can render to *adivasis* — on their terms and not ours — which shall form the criteria by which our notions of development will be judged.

Our discipline ... conditioned us to lay sole emphasis on economic approach to the problems. .... but it is only a partial remedy of a complex problem, and, by itself, it may turn out to be no remedy at all. .... it is essential that we first find for ourselves a place in the homes and hearts of the people. The surest way to get there is through relieving their physical pains, and kindling, in our very limited way, some dark corners of their minds. Is our activity in light of each new experience? .... And if an error is corrected, when it is recognized as such, the path of error is the path of truth.

GRAIN GOLAS AND ECONOMIC TRANSITION.

D. G. KARVE.

Nature is changeful, and human societies are no exception to this rule. But not all societies change with equal speed at all times. Hence we speak of stagnant societies. Change is neither at a uniform pace, nor is it always in the direction of acknowledged betterment, or progress. A change for the better at a fast enough rate to mark the new as compared with the old is described as transition. A relatively stagnant or backward community pushing itself ahead so as to fall in line with prevailing standards of good living is said to be undergoing a process of modernization. Both transition and modernization are, however, comparative notions.

At any given time within the same country, while a major process of transition towards modernity, as viewed from the international angle, might be in motion, a part of the country might be struggling to reach the level of modernity already attained by the rest of the country. It is essential for purposes of an integrated national plan to ensure, on the one hand, that overall progress is rapid, and on the other, that no avoidable disparities in standards of achievement are allowed to grow among different parts.

In the sphere of economic activity some of the significant transitions are from barter to money exchange, from primitive to scientific cultivation, and from subsistence to market-farming. Over the larger part of the country, transition to money economy is well-nigh complete, and the national plans of development

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are now concentrated on devising plans for scientific cultivation and profitable farming. In some of the States, however, large areas are still in a state of primitive living, where not only is scientific market-agriculture unknown, but even exchange for money is relatively an uncommon phenomenon.

In so far as economic progress is a significant aspect of general progress, and agriculture is a basic occupation within the availability of productive resources, all hopes of modernization of these areas hang round the improvement of the peoples' life as farmers. To be lasting, such an improvement must be the result of the growing aspirations and achievements of the people themselves.

The educative process, not only in terms of literacy and general knowledge, but also in regard to the awareness of alternative opportunities of betterment, is the most basic contribution to progress. Community Development and agricultural Extension are designed to promote this movement of social education, which must concern itself with all aspects, including the economic.

Rural development in a large part of Orissa State is confronted with this very task of a comprehensive transition of tribal communities. How to evolve a new and a better life out of the existing practices and institutions of the people, so that they may take their place alongside the rest of the Indian people, is a problem. Whichever aspect of their life is chosen for reformist action is seen to impinge on several others, and unless all these changes act in unison there is no prospect of a positive improvement in the lot of the people.

GRAIN *GOLAS*:

Grain *Golas* are an instance in point. In at least eight districts of the State, where tribal communities exist in large numbers, agriculture is only a part-time occupation of the people. Not only are methods of tillage most primitive, but even shifting cultivation is not unknown.

The principal occupational need is seed for sowing at the beginning of the season, as the total produce of the field is not adequate to provide for the year's consumption and a surplus which may be used for seed. In fact, the produce suffices for only a part of the year and it has often to be borrowed even for that purpose. Grain occupies the dual position of both an important article of consumption, and also a means of exchange. Thus we have a paradox of part-time inefficient cultivation of grain in what may be described as a grain-economy, in contrast with a money-economy.

The Grain *Gola* is a system of individual and social saving which was natural to primitive tribal society. Traditionally money has been described as an economic good with high economic density and ready negotiability. The generally acceptable grain represented such a commodity in primitive societies. Where the tribal bond of a community had been differentiated into specialized services and occupations, the better-to-do among the farmers built up stocks of grain, which they renewed from season to season, and out of which they sold or lent stocks, as was most convenient.

Where individualization of possessions and specialization of functions had not advanced to a great extent the responsibility of maintaining stocks for essential seasonal use devolved on the community as a whole. In its original form the Grain *Gola* is such a community convenience. It operates as a revolving stock of essential grain out of which a cultivator borrows for his needs and into which he repays at a customary premium, which in Orissa is usually twenty-five percent.

The common grain-stock is used primarily for seed, and for part maintenance during the cultivating season. It is immune from vagaries of individual fortunes, though over a whole area a bad season may deplete it very seriously. In a society which is mostly a closed community of subsistence farmers, this institution has obvious advantages. It was, therefore, natural that when Community Development and national Extension reached these areas, an orderly transformation of the common Grain

Gola service into a multi-purpose co-operative society should be thought of.

The process of economic transition brings with it growing contacts with other parts of the country. People within the region either go out to seek employment or send out goods to outside markets. People from elsewhere come to the area to settle and to trade. New occupations develop to supplement agriculture. Thus the simplicity and self-contained character of the community are broken.

The whole wide market of the country, to go no further, is open to the local population to buy and to sell, not only goods but also services. This exchange, through which alone growing specialization of production is to develop, is not possible without the introduction of money economy. Diversification and intensification of economic activity is inevitably connected with replacement of uniformity by the division of labour, and of grain by a money economy.

The process of modernization has, therefore, to proceed on all fronts. Agriculture, industry, trade, education, civic amenities have all to be promoted through appropriate institutions of Community Development. In keeping with the traditions of the people, some form of a *panchayat* council has to do duty for local government, and some form of a co-operative has to be adopted in respect of the occupational, or business interests of the people. While it would be tempting to assume that the appropriate areas of operation of the two should as nearly as possible be identical, the more relevant consideration would be that of functional adequacy.

Both a *panchayat* and a co-operative have a certain function to perform in respect of the appropriate interests of their members, and if it is felt that the area to be completely governed at any time should be large or small, there is no reason to assume that a co-operative must necessarily have the same territorial limitation.

Especially in regard to occupational or business interests, an element of selectiveness, expansion and mutual obligation is so

predominant that the composition and extent of a co-operative society must be recognised to be a very elastic and variable notion. The historical link between tribal *panchayat* and Grain *Gola* is unsuited to the whole concept of economic and institutional development. Even where the Grain *Gola* is to be continued, it would affect the interest of only the agriculturally employed population, and it will have to be organized in such a way as to be assured of efficient and profitable management.

A certain size which would ensure sufficient earning to render good storage and management feasible would be called for. True, up to a point, for a brief transitional period, subsidies can be thought of. But in an effort towards development, self-sufficiency and progress must be assured within a reasonable period. When the occupational activities of members, as well as their domestic needs, are becoming more and more dependent on the operations of the wider market, the activities of their co-operative society will themselves represent cash transactions in an increasing measure.

It is, therefore, appropriate that Grain *Gola* and cash business should be combined in one and the same institution; that these institutions should be strong enough to be efficient and self-supporting; and that gradually the single-purpose grain business should yield to multipurpose monetary transactions. The element of direct service and recovery contained in grain loans is a feature which modern co-operative practice in India has welcomed.

The principle of crop loan is to issue such credit in kind as may be needed for particular purposes, and to recover it out of the proceeds of each crop, in the collection and sale of which the co-operative plays a direct role. While such a transformation is going on, other needs for development such as fertilizers, implements, pesticides are also met on the same principle.

It is natural that, when the Grain *Gola* was no more than the communal stock of essential grain, even the smallest community should try and have a *Gola* of its own. But as a nucleus of a developing co-operative service an optimum size of operations is needed. It is, therefore, in the fitness of things that out of

about 2,000 Grain *Golas*, about 800 should have been selected to be *Gola*-cum-cash multipurpose co-operative societies. This, however, is only the beginning.

Unless, in a planned manner, the area of operation and the scope of activity of the multipurpose units is extended so as to cover the area and membership represented by the rest, a most unwelcome situation would develop. Neither the new nor the old societies would do well. There should be some orderly method by which the smaller *Golas* are rendered increasingly superfluous, and are, if necessary, absorbed into the multipurpose societies.

In keeping with the rate of progress of agricultural Extension it should be possible to rationalize the whole institutional set-up by the end of the Third Five Year Plan. The need for efficient technical assistance and administrative supervision in a transitional area such as this would be paramount. In fact, in the absence of such assured technical and supervisory services the beneficent effect of all other inputs would be seriously in doubt.

Grain *Golas* are only one instance out of many. The stagnant, and at best economically backward state of tribal communities must be brought to an end as quickly as possible. At least by the end of the Third Five Year Plan, all of them should be well on the way to taking their position alongside the rest of the people of this country. If this transition of development is to be a process of growth *of* and *by* the tribal people themselves, co-operative institutionalization must be vigorously proceeded with. The co-operative institutions must themselves be built on evolutionary but progressive lines. Both in their establishment and working, social education in the broadest sense of the term must be given the very first place.

February, 1962.

PART 2

Appreciations of Nagin

IN MEMORIAM

VAIKUNTH L. MEHTA

This appreciation is edited from an "In memoriam" article contributed to the Fifth Annual issue of a local periodical, "Jagriti".

I first met Nagin Parekh when, on behalf of the Sarva Seva Sangh, Shri Annasaheb arranged a meeting of friends and sympathizers of his cause at the office of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission, sometime in April 1959. The background notes for the meeting were the handiwork, principally, of Naginbhai; and it was he who drew up the report of the proceedings. He made useful contributions to the discussions, which were lucid and precise. A day or two after the meeting, I have the recollection of discussing with him and Shri Annasaheb, the further steps that they proposed to take in pursuance of the various suggestions made at the meeting. It was on that occasion, I discovered for myself—what I was led to expect by what others had observed—the thoughtfulness, the orderliness of mind and the balance evinced by this young recruit to the Sarvodaya cause. With all this went the intellectual humility so essential for a seeker after truth.

Just as from 1916 to 1947, Gandhiji drew large numbers of ardent-spirited young men from all over the country to dedicate themselves to a life of service to the nation, so Vinobaji inspired

The late Vaikunth L. Mehta, was one of our greatest losses in 1965. He retired as Chairman of the All-India Khadi and Village Industries Commission. He came of a distinguished family, belonging to the veterans' line of the Congress. His experience with public administration was invaluable to Nagin.

several among those of the succeeding generation to give their all to the cause of Sarvodaya. Circumstances being different, the number who responded to the call has probably not been so large as in the first few decades of the century. But the impulses that have moved the young men and women are the same. As a writer has said "the intuitive feeling which prompts a man to look after the interests of another is an expression of pure culture". We in India cannot claim a monopoly of that culture. Still, there is something unique in these devoted adherents of the cause that Gandhiji (and after him Vinobaji) espoused, assisting in the building up of a new social order, in no rancorous spirit but with compassion in their hearts.

Among the new generation of servants of India, Naginbhai takes a high rank. All his abilities—and these were of a high order—were dedicated to the service of the lowliest of the low. The *adivasis* of Koraput are about the most disadvantaged among the weaker sections of the population of India. Once he had placed his services for work in this region at the disposal of Shri Annasaheb and the Sarva Seva Sangh some five years ago, he never flinched, he never looked back. The steadfastness, grit, faith he evinced in the discharge of the mission entrusted to him, marked him out as a worker who could bear burdens with a sense of responsibility and firmness of purpose which are not common. That such a servant of humanity should have his career cut off suddenly in the prime of his life is a tragic occurrence which we at the Khadi and Village Industries Commission—with which he was associated—mourn along with many among his colleagues and comrades all over India.

December 1961

PORTRAIT OF A DEVOTEE

ANNASAHEB SAHASRABUDDHE

My first meeting with Nagin Parekh was in Vinobaji's camp on his second tour through Andhra, in February or March 1956. I was there for a meeting of the Sarva Seva Sangh. I think Nagin had come with a friend. He had come to travel with Vinoba, and had already been with him for a couple of weeks.

Memory tells me that I introduced myself to Nagin and asked what had brought him to Vinoba. He said he wanted to know more about the *Bhoodan* Movement and wished to stay with Vinobaji for a month or so. He told me about himself and his previous work. Together with two of his friends he was helping to publish a magazine. He was also associated with a cultural youth-exchange programme, in which it was arranged for young boys and girls to live in India as guests of families; and for similar hospitality to be offered abroad to Indian boys and girls. I also gathered that Nagin had been abroad and was educated there. I had then no idea that, at Vinobaji's request, he would actually come and make Koraput his home, leaving behind him both a life of comfort and ease, and a promising career.

A couple of months afterwards Nagin came to see me either in Jeypore or Koraput. He told me that Vinobaji had asked him to go to Koraput to work in the *Gramdan* Movement. Ordinarily, when a young, new person came to our group in Koraput, he would ask to be given some work and I would send him where help was needed. It was different with Nagin. He told me that he would first go around the District, to observe the work that was going on at the several centres. Within about

three months, he said, he would come back and discuss his scheme of work with me. He also expressed a desire that he be allowed to choose his colleagues.

I do not remember just what he saw in Koraput District, nor where he went. However, I have a feeling that he stayed for a long time in Boipariguda and made friends with the local *Bhoodan* workers there. Finally he made his choice to settle in Limbaguda.

Making Village Friends.

Nagin's strategy was to eat with a different household in the village every day. He would send his day's supply of food to the village family's house so that their meals and his were cooked together. As he ate in their house, he could then insist that they share his food and that he be allowed to share theirs—especially the millet (*ragi*) porridge that is the staple food in the area. This change to a poorer diet did affect his health. But his gain in the love, friendship and trust of the *adivasis* was tremendous. Further the common meals were the perfect way of observation in order to reach an intimate, yet unnoticed knowledge of each host-family.

During the first few months he also made it a habit to go out and work with the young *adivasi* boys in the fields or the forest. By such subtle approaches, Nagin became friends with everyone in the village.

When he started to live in Koraput District, Nagin said that if he were to work amongst *adivasis* in Orissa he must learn to understand and speak Oriya. Rather than learn the book-Oriya, he chose to go to a junior school and learn the language with the children. He therefore, spent a couple of months learning Oriya in Baji Raut Chhatrabas, a basic-education institution at Angul.

Later on, he stayed alone at Limbaguda, amongst *adivasis*, which increased his ability to converse in Oriya, at first haltingly, but quite soon with astonishing fluency. Finally, he would make speeches in Oriya at their meetings. Nagin's approach to the

language struck me as particularly characteristic of him; it showed the pains he would take with his mission. Compared with between 75 and 100 other persons who came to Koraput during that heyday of the *Gramdan* Movement, Nagin's was the outstanding example of close application.

Programme: Education in Community and Credit.

After he settled down at Limbaguda, he prepared, with local workers, a scheme for the distribution of credit. He asked for a cash fund of Rs. 3,000 plus a further Rs. 3,000 for investment in bullock-pairs which were to be distributed. The latter distribution was already organized in *Gramdan* villages as a free grant.

However, Nagin proposed that this grant be given to the *gramsabha*, a village council of which all adults were members, and that the *gramsabha* should advance the bullock-pair to the individual farmer as a medium-term loan, to be returned in 3 to 5 years. The *gramsabha* could then utilize the whole amount allotted to it for bullock-pairs, as a revolving fund.

The time was one when the current idea was that the poor condition of the *adivasi* entitled him to free grants of as many as possible of his more costly necessities. Naginbhai's suggestion was thus a practical and fresh plea for recognition of the *adivasi* as a fully responsible person, to be trusted, and trained in dependability. Relationships were to be those of one friend who was obliged to seek help from another. The mutual attitude which treated the *adivasi* as a new and uncertain member of our more sophisticated culture was thus to be left behind us.

In each of the *Gramdan* villages, Nagin primarily organised *gramsabha* as the responsible agent for distribution of both forms of credit, and for its due recovery from the loanees. At the time, there was no *Gram Panchayat Grain Gola** in the Limbaguda

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*See article by Prof. D. G. Karve, pages 70-75 of this publication for explanation of *Grain Gola*. *A Gram Panchayat* is an administrative body for the village, or a contiguous group of villages, elected by adult franchise of all its individuals. (Editor).

area; the only credit society operating there was fully controlled by a few well-to-do landlords.

Nagin's plans of course threatened the easy monopoly of these persons. They had made profit from the improvident and perpetually needy *adivasi*. The Sarva Seva Sangh, by a process of aid and cultivation of new values and habits, had organized for two aims. The *Gramsabha* would gather the combined powers of the village folk for justice, and give them an active form, at least in the sense of fair-play. It would also learn to keep proper record of loans made, security pledged and agreements for repayment or forfeit in case of failure to repay. All this common strength of system would be worked out according to the best of the *adivasis'* values; and, as such, it would in time become legally formidable.

Besides the revival, through the *Gramsabha*, of the old tribal principles of reliability and equality in the laws of property and labour, Nagin's organization worked specially hard on those who took loans. The aim with such families was similar: a factual revival of joint responsibility, record-keeping in unforced agreement with the provider of credit, and a real effort to repay on time, or to tender the forfeit without reserve, if repayment failed.

Gradually, Nagin's organization grew; and, since the educational task was heavy, more Sarva Seva Sangh workers joined him from outside Orissa. Store and godown buildings were put up. A residential quarter for outside workers and a community house for all, were also built. For each of these constructions Nagin adopted local design as far as possible, and used local material. Of course, the building work was almost solely done by local labour's skill.

Nagin's ambitions for his *adivasi* friends naturally kept him searching for simple means to ease their integration with the rapidly changing world around them. His credit organization expanded, but constituted a slow process of education. Moreover, the skills and values which it strengthened were ready reassertions of village solidarity. As such they were little more

than preparatory to a fresh entry of *adivasis* into the main stream of India's development.

Active Gramdan Raises Aggressive Opposition.

Meanwhile an opposition to the *Gramdan* movement was growing in Boipariguda area; *it first raised its head around Limbaguda, where Nagin was living, and later on it spread elsewhere. The antagonism became so intense and insistent that many of us thought of withdrawing from the area; Nagin characteristically decided to carry on.

The *Gramsabhas* had not been working long enough to establish themselves unshakeably. Therefore, as the opposition to *Gramdan* grew in strength, they weakened and became ineffective agencies for the advance and recovery of credit. Nagin realistically proposed shifting the agency for credit to the registered *Gram Panchayat* Grain *Gola* Societies that were being promoted by the Co-operative Department. So he and his colleagues took a lead in organizing, at first two such Societies; one at Boipariguda and the other at Digapur. Next, in 1959, two more were started in the Kenduguda and Ramgiri *Panchayats.* By the time the Sarva Seva Sangh had undertaken a pilot Development Block for the area, a total credit of over Rs. 25,000/- had been distributed.

Nagin's principles were never better illustrated than by his firm attitude towards credit advanced through the *Gramsabhas.*

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*For the reader unfamiliar with Kalinga — least visited of all parts of India — some directions may help. Koraput is the southernmost of Orissa's 13 districts; it marches with Ganjam (N.E.), Bandh-Khondmals & Kalahandi, with Bastar (M.P.) and Srikakulam, Vishakapatnam and East Godavari (Kakinada) of A.P. in the south.

Koraput's tribal population is 912,343, or 21½% of Orissa's total. Koraput's total population is 1,421,300 or 8% of Orissa's total. But Koraput's area is 16% of all Orissa.

The principal towns are Jeypore (25,201), the junction of the national highway-section — Raipur, Jagdalpur, Viziangram and Rayagada, the District's only railway station. Boipariguda is 14 miles south-west of Jeypore and the headquarters of a Community Development Block of 1956-57.

This could not be said about most of the other workers of the Sangh in Koraput. When loans have been advanced to small farmers and tenants who are poor, it is always tempting to handle defaulters leniently or carelessly, and to write off advances to them as lost. But Nagin never took such an easy view; he regarded such a response by the lender to the borrower's failure to repay in due time as even more unfair on the defaulter than on the Sangh, and a bad example both for the Agent and other borrowers. Therefore, he pursued recoveries for years after repayment of loans were due. When the Sarva Seva Sangh handed over to the *Kshetra Samiti*, Nagin accepted the liability of unrecovered loans on behalf of the Samiti.

Tribal Vitality and Co-operation

Nagin had decided upon his attitude and method of work. He was a convinced co-operator and aimed at getting *adivasis* to revive the mutual self-help of their tribal traditions. Therefore, he offered to organize, with them, as many aspects of their common life as possible, by using the new forms of co-operative institutions.

His method was to begin by meeting the most demoralizing group of their constant needs, firstly through a credit co-operative, secondly by a retail store, and thirdly, by marketing of their surplus agricultural produce. He saw their problem of working with the surrounding world initially as a revolution from barter to a cash economy. These principles and reasons made him aim at 100% membership of co-operatives.

Following this approach, Nagin organized one Grain *Gola* Co-operative Society, for each of the five panchayats in the area; opened four Co-operative stores, and started the marketing of some surplus produce, in anticipation of organizing a Co-operative. In addition he organized Co-operative Societies for the hand-pounding of paddy; for utilization of forest products, and for labour contracts. Patiently, with single-minded attention and devotion, he was building up a network of Co-operative Societies to serve all the principal common interests of the *adivasis*.

Naginbhai had it in mind to correlate the various development works which paid wages with the credit agency. If a habit could be formed so that an *adivasi* worked on the land in the rainy season, and later on was employed by a development organization, he could use part of the earnings to repay his loans to marginal land-holders, and even to the landless. Agreements drawn on the new practice of an extended working period would also stretch the *adivasis*' normal credit-limit much further. The gross credit through each of the Co-operative Societies had otherwise to be based upon the meagre product of the soil belonging to land-owning members. As the *adivasis* themselves say, the Earth their Mother, seems to yield less to each successive generation.

Nagin, therefore, had the idea to use their labour to replenish the land as well as in the better-yielding techniques of cultivation. In this dual aim, he was relying on their religious feeling for the Earth Mother: they would serve Her better, and thus be justified in persuading Her to give them more produce.

He therefore undertook a soil-conservation scheme, on wages, in the two villages of Daraguda and Limbaguda. The experiment was not encouraging. Those who came to give labour were mostly either those who had not taken a loan, those who had already repaid the advances made to them, or those who could repay from the produce of their land. The defaulters avoided working on such projects.

Further Efforts and Experience.

In 1957 we put before the Government a proposal to form a District Co-operative Union for the Koraput *Gramdans*. The Sarva Seva Sangh was to contribute Rs. 2 to 3 lakhs as foundation capital and the Reserve Bank was to advance Rs. 20 lakhs through the Provincial Co-operative Bank. All the *Gramdani* villages were to have Credit Co-operative Societies, through which they would be members of this Union. The proposal did not materialize because the State Government did not favour it.

The inspiration and enthusiastic canvassing of this proposal had come from Shri Datye, an engineer working with us in Koraput, and Nagin. This is further confirmation of Nagin's faith in the co-operative way.

All of us in Koraput were beginners in the field of co-operative promotion and organization. Naginbhai felt that we should call in some experienced persons from outside who would help to set up sound Societies. With this in mind he went to Bombay and Gujerat. He visited the rural University of Lok-Bharati, at Sanosara near Bhavnagar. At his request, Shri Manubhai Pancholi, the Principal, with about twenty students, came and stayed in Koraput for a month. We also made plans to send our workers to Lok Bharati for training; and we hoped to secure some of its graduates to work for us in developing agriculture as well as co-operation.

Naginbhai also met Shri Vaikunthbhai Mehta, who helped us to try and obtain the services of an experienced co-operator for organizing Koraput District. Since, however, the Government of Orissa at about this time had settled to an attitude of lethargy and even obstruction, these plans could not materialize. I have mentioned these facts here to stress Naginbhai's unshakeable faith in co-operatives and his ceaseless efforts to promote them as a prime element in his design for rural development. To him, the Co-operative Society appeared as a modern institution which could uniquely give expression to the primary solidarity of our particular group of tribal people.

Personal Equipment & Application.

Nagin's keen intellect, trained in analytical scholarship, plunged him deep in our problems. Having determined all essential aspects of the situation, the attitudes of the people concerned and the technical needs to be fulfilled, he would begin by a study of all the recorded experience he could gather. His approach to every fresh proposal was firstly by analysis. Thus he read about the *adivasis'* social and religious problems, their accepted values and principles and their economic history as dependent on

the natural bounties of the region. On the technical side, he read about rural credit systems and co-operation. These were his three main interests.

To get first-hand knowledge and the feel of the problems, he selected a sample of 45 families; and, with them, he made a detailed research of his own design into their credit needs, and the sources from which they had obtained loans. Nagin also cultivated his co-workers and students of rural development, besides distinguished veterans in the field. He met them when he could, and corresponded with them in order to learn more of practice and to correct his own biases.

I remember that when we met, usually once a fortnight, the time was all too short for our discussions, exchange of thoughts and accounts of what we had each been reading. After taking over the responsibility for the Boipariguda Pilot Project, Nagin found it more and more difficult to get enough time and peace of mind to satisfy his growing need for more knowledge.

He came from a rich family. He could have carried on with a life of great ease, but he chose the hard way. Probably in order to equate his conditions of life and work with those of his immediate colleagues, he lived on what he earned. Occasionally some emergency forced him to borrow from his family; and then he always repaid their loan, as a first charge on his next earning. We paid him Rs. 75/- p.m. for the first three years. Later on, as Organizer for the Intensive Area at Boipariguda, he started getting Rs. 200 to Rs. 250 p.m.; but he made no change whatever in his simple way of living. Until nearly the end of his life, he and his fellow-workers messed together and shared a living room, which was also their bedroom.

Naginbhai as a Colleague.

A large part of his salary, from the beginning of his service, was spent on helping his colleagues to tide over their financial difficulties; and he would pay the school expenses of some promising *adivasi* boy or girl. When his salary increased, he expanded his contributions both to supplement the salaries of low-paid

workers and to *adivasis*' educational costs. The group of development workers which Nagin had gathered round him had his constant care. He expressed his loyalty to them practically. By his own extra-hard work, he made their lives easier and kept them happy. All such labours were unobtrusive, so that his colleagues whose load was lightened by Nagin could have no sense of being aided as inferiors.

Nagin was a complete democrat. To apportion the jobs, he formed, for each joint activity, a continuous sub-committee composed of most of the workers. Besides this specific arrangement, he also convened a monthly general meeting attended by all workers in his area. Nagin's idea of leadership prevented him from taking decisions without consulting his subordinates. He was even averse to determining general policy himself, and tried to make the monthly-meeting work out such general lines of action, by examining the evidence for different choices. Similarly, the implementing action, in his view, had to be decided by the sectional sub-committees; so that the jobs could be shared out among the working members, each of whom would then know what he was doing—and why.

The deliberations of these committees were nearly always long-winded, boresome and often fruitless. Sometimes I doubted the wisdom of his methods, which delayed many decisions and diverted the energies of the members from the fieldwork, which was their main purpose. Nagin's faith in his colleagues was also a factor which made him force choices on them. He was convinced that every man can find the reasons for his work, and thus feel truly responsible for it—up to his logical and emotional limits.

For five years, through many vicissitudes, Nagin kept his team-work sound and thus exemplified a true practical democracy—suitable for government officials as well as *adivasis.* Nagin's consistent opinion and policy was that, only by exercising his full capacity in thought as well as action, could any man accommodate enough of others' points of view to collaborate freely with his colleagues in the field of action.

The Personal Equation.

Nagin wanted to take a month or two off every year, to see how similar development work was done elsewhere. He felt the need of a longer and wider perspective from which he could value the Koraput operations more objectively. There was also his conscious need for physical as well as mental refreshment. Somehow, though, he got so involved in Limbaguda affairs that his only trips away from Koraput were either on our business or, rarely, to visit his family. As a result, he got stale and exhausted by the constant pressure of five years' concentrated effort. He knew he was being drained of all energy and stamina. Therefore, at the end he tried, just as vainly, to take a study-tour abroad, as the quickest source of fresh vitality.

Nagin was by nature a reserved person. He and I enjoyed most intimate relations with each other, but we seldom discussed his personal problems. He was more free with his immediate colleagues. His former friends and his family were pressing him to marry. He was very willing, provided he could find a wife who would share his life amongst the *adivasis* and hence his work with them. He clearly needed an intellectual as well as an emotional companion. I, too, must have discussed this problem with him three or four times in the five years, and I remember having suggested to him a few possible candidates, In the past year, Nagin asked me to make a proposal on his behalf to a girl whom I knew.

The Practical and the Profound

Sometimes I feel Nagin was two persons. Indeed, I had the impression that, with his tremendous drive, sustained energy and practicality, there was perhaps more of **sattwa* that of *rajas* in his true make-up. He told me a few times that he was making an effort to detach himself from his work and his colleagues so as to lead a more inward life. This sounded to me like the *karma-yoga* of the Bhagvad Gita, so unmistakably des-

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*This paragraph refers to Krishna's insistence that Arjun, born and brought up as a soldier, has no choice but to fight. *Rajas* means such qualities as action and energy. *Sattwa* expresses the meditative search for truth. There was probably no *tamas* — or worldly attachment in Nagin's nature!

cribed in Chapter Three. I knew that Nagin would not leave his job, so that no other practice of detachment was intended.

Nagin was a man of few words, and sceptical about the high and loud talk of *Bhoodan* and *Gramdan* workers and their leaders. It was probably his basic, spiritual honesty as much as his high standards of intellectual grasp and criticism that caused him to stay out of meetings whenever he could. When he had to be present, he acted the silent observer as far as others would permit him to do so. He preferred to work steadily at his chosen task, without talking about it.

Within a period of five years, Nagin planned and created a ground-network of co-operative societies. With this foundation laid, he felt unsure of how further progress should be directed. He told me that he was groping in the dark, so that he wanted me to come and stay with him to help him find a way out. This request he made repeatedly during his last few months.

His steadfastness and dedication to principle are clear from the stand he took on the future of the Boipariguda Pilot Project. After *Panchayati Raj* was introduced, we re-examined the whole issue: whether to continue our Project, and in what capacity. There were two principal alternatives for us. One was to hand over the whole responsibility to the Development *Block's Panchayat Samiti,** accepting it as a fully-fledged people's body and thus to justify our withdrawal from the area. The other alternative was to hand over all the running development programme to the *Panchayat Samiti* and remain in the area as an agency for further education of the people and promotion among them. Nagin rejected both these alternatives. He was firm in his decision to continue with the Project until some concrete incident should force him to withdraw from the field. He felt that, as the Sarva Seva Sangh, we had given our word to the tribal people and it was our duty to hold to our word by continuing practical aid, unless the Government openly broke

*The *Panchayati Samiti* is the administrative body representing about 60 to 70,000 population in the Development Block. This is made up by indirect election from the *sarpanchas*, who have already been elected by adult majority in each village.

its promise to help us in our form of aid in development. Meanwhile he proposed to put all possible faith in the *Panchayati Samiti* and in the State Government as its administrative superior, so that he might continue working to persuade the Government to accept his view of development by education, and the gradual formation of fresh undertakings through co-operative economy and democratic policies.

It was largely in deference to his exemplary sense of duty that we accepted further work with the Project, although I think it would have been wiser to withdraw.

Nagin's death is an enduring mystery to me as it must be to many of his friends. He looked well and had never complained much of bad health. The news of his sudden death came to me as an earthquake shock. I still wonder what unknown private burden he carried within himself which weakened his heart so much.

September 1962

IMMORTAL

Vinoba Bhave

Most readers outside India will probably know about Vinobaji and his mobile camps all over India, in which he continues to propagate his interpretation of Gandhiji's principles. The focus of these endlessly moving operations through the villages has, since the mid-'Fifties, been upon the stimulation of rural people to make gifts of land either as Bhoodan or Gramdan. These are defined elsewhere.

The nature of Vinobaji's work makes it impossible for him to write at any length on such a matter as the death of a village colleague like Nagin. His Hindi is racy of the soil, and hence almost untranslatable. A fair paraphrase of the essential matter is as follows:-

. . . We move about in far away villages. Therefore, such things occur to the soldiers of peace. By serving devotedly and with a whole heart in a strange region, Nagin became dear to God, to Whom he was gathered at an early age. . .

7 January 1962

SPECIFIC LOSSES

D. R. GADGIL

I met Shri Nagin Parekh only a few times. The first time was during my visit to Koraput in the first week of January 1957; I met him later a few times in Bombay and Poona during his infrequent visits to these cities. However, I was in contact with him from there, through reports of friends and by letters. This brief note is an inadequate tribute to one for whom I came to have deep regard and affection, and in relation to whom, above all, I had the greatest hopes regarding future constructive work.

Naginbhai appeared to be uniquely endowed for success in the type of constructive work to which he dedicated himself. One felt that his success would undoubtedly prove of the greatest importance to India of the future. The strongest first impression got of him was one of great modesty and unpretentiousness. You could not call him shy, neither was he uncommunicative; but he appeared distinctly reluctant to thrust himself forward or demand attention from others. When he spoke there was obviously a keen desire not to overstate; and a reluctance to refer either to his personal share in events, or to his contribution to current developments. However, this was merely the first impression.

After some acquaintance, or even after a prolonged first conversation, it was clear that behind an unassuming exterior Nagin carried a clear brain and an orderly, methodical and practical mind. In all these respects one could not help being

D. R. Gadgil is an economist, and is the Head of the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona. This Institution is among the first of the social science establishments organized in India to tackle local problems.

impressed by the contrast with the general run of young people attracted by this type of work.

The usual kind of young *Sarvodaya* worker, as a rule, has a strong idealistic strain in him. He is apt to be enthusiastic and emotionally high-strung. He naturally thinks a great deal of his ideas and ideals; he is full of these, and occasionally, of himself. At the same time, the young idealist is usually not practical in his approach to affairs. Usually he has had little experience of dealing with practical matters in day-to-day life. The turn of his mind also leads him, ordinarily, to disregard if not to disdain detail. One had expected the somewhat unusual case of an Oxford man burying himself voluntarily in a remote village of an unknown aboriginal area to exhibit some of these characteristics; because of this expectation the contrasting indications at a first meeting were all the greater.

I shall always remember the impression made by the highly direct and businesslike approach to the management of the Co-operative Society's affairs at Limbaguda. All the problems, from that of the construction of godowns to that of the retail distribution of kerosene were evidently thought out ahead in detail. The current handling also looked like an efficient operation.

LAND REFORM.

This feature of Nagin's approach was high-lighted in discussions of the important problem of land redistribution. This was currently a matter of keen controversy in the Koraput and related circles. There were two points of view in the field both forcefully and cogently put forward and both having great plausibility.

On the one hand it was said that, in view of the older heavy concentration, the practical approach indicated was that of gradualness, so that though no immediate equality of land holdings was brought about, a reduction of great differences and immediate relief to the landless would result.

On the other hand, there was the plea for radical action so that the birth of a new society may be clearly evident to the people. It was not surprising to find Naginbhai adhering to the

first approach. He cogently argued for it on lines of the need to convince people as was considered essential in *Gramdan* work, to take the people along in any decision.

The extent to which you could justify, in the eyes of village society, the deprivation of present holders was to him an important point. Undoubtedly, the temper of village society itself might be influenced by forceful external leadership. However, it was clear that the approach in Limbaguda would largely be in keeping with the spirit of *Gramdan*, and that the emphasis on near-unanimity would naturally lead to the adoption of gradualism.

THE GRADUALIST.

Naginbhai's whole personality was adapted and suited to this approach. What was unique in him was that, while adopting gradualism as the best and the most suited method to achieve a peaceful transition, he saw steadily ahead to the ultimate aim of a radical transformation. As a result, the small immediate step was not to him, as to many gradualists, something that was considered as itself an achievement over which you could rest for a long time.

He thought in terms of a long-term programme in which pressures were continuously maintained for taking each logical step forward towards an ultimate end. In drawing up and implementing such long-term programmes his flair for practical affairs was a great asset.

In discussing these long-term programmes, I discovered in him a characteristic which again was somewhat exceptional. This was that his capacity for practical affairs did not incline him to the rule-of-thumb approach of practical men. From his university days he retained something of the student and the experimentalist. His practical approach led him to think in terms not only of dealing efficiently with existing situations, but also of experimenting continuously so as to achieve the transformation desired in the best possible ways.

It was in this connection that I had contacts with him in the years subsequent to my visit to Koraput. He would set down his experience in small notes which were brief studies of what was happening and what was sought currently to be done in his area. All these notes related also to what might be attempted in the future.

It was because of this trait, in particular, that when I heard of the possibility of Naginbhai being put in charge of a development block, I thought how ideal such an arrangement would be. A man with vision, dedicated to reconstruction of the life of a depressed area and people, yet a gradualist with a highly practical sense and an urge to keep moving on; these are just the qualities required for leadership in rural India; or, for that matter in any part of the country or the world at this juncture.

However, this desired situation was not to be, and we are left with haunting memories of a career, for the country tragically cut short; and of a personality, contact with whom, even though infrequent, was charming and ennobling.

May, 1962

THE TORCH BEARER

R. K. PATIL

I believe it was in 1955 that I first came across Shri Nagin Parekh. One fine morning a young man stepped into my house, and explained that he had just arrived from Bombay and was on his way to Koraput. I immediately asked him to take his seat and we started talking. Nagin told me how he had met Vinoba and had been advised by him to work in Koraput. I further learnt that he had been educated in England, and had also spent considerable time in Yugoslavia.

We quickly became such friends that I could not resist the temptation of asking him to stay for lunch, an invitation which he readily accepted. That was the beginning of our acquaintance and our friendship.

The late Naginbhai had a very pleasing personality, with suave manners and speech. He made friends almost at first sight and his whole make-up was that of a leader amongst a group of friends. It was this quality of his which made him so eminently fitted for the role to which he was assigned amongst the *adivasis* of Koraput. He soon gathered round a group of friends, to whom he succeeded in imparting his own sincerity and loyalty.

A young man with foreign experience is usually anxious to make his work in the go-ahead life of the country. In these days, particularly after Independence, he is anxious for a job which holds out good future prospects. It is our common complaint today that we do not find young and dedicated individuals.

R. K. Patil was an I.C.S. officer, who in the early days of Independence thought he could serve the country better as a member of the Planning Commission. Finally he decided that Sàrvodaya was his field of work.

Nagin was an exception. He had a self-effacing nature, bent on service. A calm and quiet person, he believed in discharging his duties as conscientiously as he could, with the least chance of causing any friction or trouble.

Indeed it was these characteristics of his that made him so successful in Koraput. Above all the capacity to maintain good relations was the first quality necessary in a worker there. The Government, if it was not hostile, was certainly not friendly. The local officials, taking their cue from the Government, were at best indifferent, if not positively unsympathetic. It was in this uncongenial setting that Naginbhai began his work.

His warmth soon melted the snow and a thaw set in. Very soon he gained the complete confidence of the local officials including the Collector and the Development Commissioner, and they indicated to him where the trouble lay and what strings had to be pulled for a quick despatch of work. And it was thus that an initially unfavourable situation was turned upside down by Naginbhai with his tact and patience.

Some of us might ask what were his achievements there. From the very beginning, the idea was not to attain certain pre-defined targets or results, but to carry out the programme of development according to the ideas and capacities of the *adivasis* themselves. The Koraput programme was a pilot project and an exercise in democratic development. Only such schemes were undertaken as proceeded from the comprehension of the *adivasis* themselves. This was the main reason for the so-called slow progress of the development programme. On the other hand, on the co-operative front, a movement which found a ready response with the *adivasis* and fitted in with their customs and organization of life, striking progress and results were achieved.

Many have suffered from Nagin's sudden demise. It was a shock to all. He established such close relations with all whom he met regularly, that his sudden passing away must have created tremendous voids in many places. But while all mourn his loss, I think the worst sufferers are the youth of this country, who

have lost a true representative of their group, and who, if he had survived, would have been able to present to them the ideal of a dedicated life of service to their motherland. This is the main quality today's youth seems to lack; it was the strongest point in Naginbhai's make-up. May his soul rest in peace, but that can only be possible, when several individuals are forthcoming to take his place.

RARELY COMPETENT

MAURICE ZINKIN

I first met Nagin Parekh in Jeypore, in the Orissa Hills. Some of the villages round about had been given to Vinoba Bhave as *gramdan*, and he was trying to make *gramdan* work.

He was not alone. There was a whole team of them. He was not the most noticeable, or even the cleverest. He stood out because he was, quite simply, determined to make *gramdan* a success. He was not thinking of himself or the name he might make for himself; he was not being flamboyantly self-sacrificing, he was not tied to an ideology, he just wanted to help people he had come to like, and to make work in practice something which had attracted him as an ideal.

When I met him, he was worried. The first flush of enthusiasm had died away in his villages. There was uncertainty, and a beginning of quarrels. The bigger men were alarmed to discover how much they had given away. The smaller men wanted the aid they had been promised. Nobody wanted to cultivate in common; everybody wanted some definite piece of land for himself. The traders were hostile, the administration worse than indifferent. None of the workers knew much about Khonds, Ranas, Oriyas or the land-revenue law of Orissa.

We discussed what could be done. I was an ex-bureaucrat, whose mind turned naturally to questions about Records of Rights and proper conveyances. The *gramdan* movement had failed to make sure that their gifts were in proper legal form,

Maurice Zinkin is an economist, and is working in the Management of UNILEVER in Britain. He served many years in India, first in the I.C.S., latterly in Hindustan Lever Ltd., of which he was a director.

and Cuttack had been less than helpful in filling in the gaps.

Nagin listened, in a way the others did not. He saw the importance of making everything regular, of not leaving the movement helpless before any village leader who might decide to backslide. Afterwards, he tried to put the position right. This same practical streak ran through everything he did. Whether it was deciding who would cultivate what, or managing the co-operative store they had set up, or dealing with officials, he looked always for the solution which would work and which, by satisfying everybody, would leave no room for future quarrels. His was the true reformer's temperament. He wanted the world to work better; he was not trying to overturn it.

Afterwards we managed sometimes to go to Orissa, and sometimes he would come and see us in Bombay. He was always the same, cheerful, imperturbable, and modest. He never complained about the harsh conditions under which he lived; his villages were very remote, his hut and his food of the simplest, there was often nobody to whom he could talk of anything beyond village affairs. He never contemplated doing anything else but serve his Khonds. He had put his shoulder to that particular wheel, and he was determined to make it move. And every time we saw him he knew a bit more about the job he was doing, he was getting a bit nearer to making *gramdan* work. He was the rarest sort of village worker, a man who never made his own sacrifices conspicuous, and who never ruined his idealism by incompetence.

Nagin Parekh was a good man. In life his goodness reminded us of how truly some men can love their neighbour; in death his memory will still inspire us.

July, 1962

A JOURNALIST'S TRIBUTE

TAYA ZINKIN

There is a saying in France that it is the best people who die young; when someone dies young the old women will shake their wise heads and say "he was too good to live". Nagin was too good to live.

In my experience I have never met a person of greater genuine humility and kindness than Nagin, and I always had the uncomfortable feeling that life was too harsh for one like him. Not that he ever complained, on the contrary he went out of his way to lead a life so hard and strenuous that it would have put off many a much hardier type, but I always had that secret feeling.

When I first met Nagin he was living in a small hut in Limbaguda and he was full of enthusiasm for *Gramdan*. The challenge of the scheme was what he required to find himself useful, and he worked, with that peculiar humility of his, amongst the villagers as if they were his betters and as if he had come to learn from them. In all my life I have come in contact with nobody else who reminded me of St. Francis de Sales, the great French Saint whose motto was that "we must help the poor to forgive us our charity" and who was the first person to create hospitals and nurses.

The second time I met Nagin, a year later, still in Limbaguda, his initial enthusiasm had given way to concern for the difficulties of execution. He was a very thoughtful person and he wanted

Taya Zinkin is a journalist, long attached to the "Guardian" (formerly the "Manchtester Guardian"). She is married to Maurice Zinkin, and, like him, is well acquainted with India, rural as well as urban.

at all times to be sure that he was going about his work in the right way.

I do not wish to say anything about his work on *Gramdan* as there are many others far better qualified than myself to say what has to be said. I want only to say that his dedication to *Gramdan* was so remarkable, particularly after he felt that enthusiasm was not enough and that it would be a long and hard time before he saw results, that it has always made me feel very humble. Whenever I have thought of Nagin, as I often have, it has been as he sat in his little hut in Limbaguda, almost cut off from the stimulations of cultural life in the Western sense. It was a sense he valued very much, as can be deduced from the fact that he was reading Camus when he died.

What drove Nagin to Limbaguda? I think it was the need to find himself as much as the need to escape from circumstances which did not make him wholly happy, and I think that had he found a companion to share his life in Limbaguda, he would have been completely happy, for in life with simple people he had found peace and the only thing he was still looking for was someone with whom to share his peace. If anyone deserves not to be reborn at all that is my friend Nagin and may he live forever freed from the pangs of rebirth.

July, 1962

A SARVODAYA COLLEAGUE SPEAKS

MANMOHAN CHOWDHRY

. . . though both of us were in Orissa, yet he had buried himself in a far away corner of Koraput and we could meet but infrequently. But whenever we met he put aside all his cares and we talked for hours, often late into the night. His interests were wide and varied, from a sawmill to world peace. It was inspiring to see and feel the devotion and care he brought to his tasks, which were no routine tasks but were the parts of a life-mission to him.

The last time I met him he was engrossed with the idea of a sawmill that he had persuaded the local *Panchayat Samiti* to sponsor in co-operation with the Sarva Seva Sangh. The Chief Minister of Orissa had raised the idea of starting medium-scale industries through the *Panchayat Samitis*, . . . perhaps Boipariguda was going to be the first *Samiti* in Orissa to start a modern industry.

But the thing for which Naginbhai will be remembered best was his loving nature, the care and attention he bestowed on his colleagues and friends, the little personal services he performed for others.

It is a great tragedy that such a rare and gifted soul should be taken away from us. But Providence has its inscrutable ways that are not for us to know. I pray that his memory may inspire us all to serve Humanity to the best of our abilities.

1 January 1962

Manmohan Chowdhry writes from the Utkal Sarvodaya Mandal at Cuttack. This is the Orissa centre for Sarvodaya, which carries on the regular work of this non-official Agency.

A SYMPATHETIC OFFICIAL'S SKETCH

T. N. SARAF

What struck one most after meeting Parekh and knowing him for some time was how unassuming the man was. A casual acquaintance would never suspect that Parekh had such high intellectual qualifications and came from a prosperous family. He was free from the besetting sin of many social workers who will never forget that they are doing a noble job selflessly and have a stage instinct to play for effect. Parekh's attitude was that he was doing nothing extraordinary; he would belittle his role in the project with which he was associated in Koraput, where I came to know him rather intimately.

I met him first in 1957, and my last view of him was in our home at Puri on 24th September, 1961. During my association with him I do not remember ever having heard him criticise anybody. He would readily see his opponents' point of view. This sometimes exasperated his friends. On such occasions, it looked as if something was lacking in his personality, and that he was rather negative in his outlook. This impression disappeared as one came to know more about the work he was doing and the way he was doing it.

He was working in very hard conditions in an area where few amenities were available. The welfare project which he had in Koraput ran into a number of difficulties in its initial stages. First, since it was a Government-financed project, though undertaken by non-official agency, certain procedures and rules and some amount of red-tape were inevitable. Parekh had no

T. N. Saraf is a member of the Indian Administrative Service and was District Magistrate of Puri District at the time of writing this note.

experience of Government machinery, but after a little while he got to know its essential features.

I think his greatest trouble was not when he was dealing with Government servants or with tribal people for whom the project was meant, but with the non-tribal small-time politicians who enormously complicated his task. He suffered the anguish of being opposed, and denied the most ordinary co-operation in his work which unquestionably would have benefited the very people who opposed him. He also had the difficulty of not finding a sufficient number of the type of workers that the project needed. With the enormous expenditure that the State is incurring in development work for rural areas and the large number of attractive vacancies in every Government department in Orissa, it was difficult to find workers who would work for motives other than mercenary, and have a spirit of dedication to their work. Parekh was fully aware of the conditions under which he would have to work.

Whether the project he headed in Koraput will succeed or not, it is too early to say. Many people thought in the beginning that it had no chance, but Parekh was dogged. He told me a number of times that he would have liked the project to cover a more backward area, right in the Malkangiri Hills which is still in a primitive state. It was, however, too late to make a change. What I want to convey is that to Parekh hardship was only a challenge that spurred him to greater activity. He was physically not very tough but his spirit was made of steel. His sense of humour was acute. What is more, he could laugh at himself, particularly when he thought he was getting too solemn and trite in explaining the lofty aims of the project.

February, 1962

A CANADIAN VOLUNTEER'S APPRECIATION

HUGUETTE LEGER

I consider myself very lucky to have been able to know Naginbhai and at the same time I feel very sorry that I could not enjoy his friendship longer. In the short time I knew him I could not do otherwise but like him and appreciate his natural qualities. What struck me most in his personality was his kindness towards everyone who came in contact with him and his capacity to put himself at the level of the people whom he met.

He was equally at home with the poorest *adivasi* and the Collector of the District. I was from the very beginning struck by the love and respect which everyone around him seemed to feel for him. I went to four villages with him and the love of the *adivasis* for him was too obvious not to be seen, he was treated like a king by them. These people will probably never forget the man who chose to come and live with them and work for them when so many things like background and education separated him from them.

I noticed his love of children. When Rangoa stayed here for a few weeks, he was sick with influenza. Naginbhai gave him his bed, and would spend so much time with him, chatting with him and playing over and over again the Yugoslavian folk song that he liked. On children's day, we attended a children's celebration in Jumma and on the way back one little girl was tired with the rather long walk. Naginbhai noticed the girl's fatigue and carried her in his arms up to her house.

Dr. Huguette Leger was a member of the Canadian Universities Service Organization, similar to the U.S.A.'s "Peace Corps," but not part of the Canadian Government's Overseas Programme.

I myself benefited from his kindness. Every day he would enquire if I had been given a sufficient amount of eggs and milk and if the food suited my Canadian eating habits. Thanks to his frequent invitations to listen to Bengali folk songs on his record-player, and to his friendly conversations with me, I very seldom felt lonely in this new environment. When one of my Canadian colleagues came to visit me, Naginbhai treated him like his own friend, so much so that John's dearest wish was to come and work here with the project. These must be some of the reasons why I feel I have lost a very good friend, one who would surely have made my stay in India still more enjoyable.

Everybody here feels that Boipariguda is not the same since Naginbhai is gone. Here is some important part of the group that is missing.

December 1961

AS A STUDENT

SUDARSHAN V. DESAI

Those of us who became close friends of Naginbhai when he was an undergraduate can remember the usual beginnings of this friendship. He would appear at the fringe of a group of friends, unobtrusively mild, almost impossible to provoke. But it was difficult not to notice him. He bore all the signs of the kind of simplicity, respect for physical labour and humility which Gandhiji established in the Indian way of life; in fact, all this being rather against the current fashion among the students, we would soon try to see if it was the usual, austeritarian *cliche*, already losing respect because of the usual influx of hypocrites and worse into the nationalist ranks, as well as the leadership.

It was at this stage that Nagin's lack of artifice and the firmness and sincerity of his beliefs were seen usually with surprise. He always regarded his ways as a matter of individual choice; rather than a social cause. He could even see possibilities of the ridiculous in them.

In many cases, therefore, friendship with him grew out of these sceptical probes which failed in their original purpose of exposing weakness. Fergusson College was particularly orientated towards respect for academic eminence; in other things cultural, moral, religious, etc., you had to be very good or very frank in order to escape ridicule or worse. This was equally true of Oxford, where a major part of education and community life entail the identification and location of the 'pseudo', wherever

S. V. Desai is an economist by profession and was contemporary with Nagin Parekh both at Fergusson College, Poona, and at Oxford.

they are. Naginbhai's ideas about what was important to him developed quite early. He wrote in a letter, in 1947 when he was just out of his twenties:-

> "One thing is certain, wherever I see even ordinary men and women exhibiting noble qualities such as sacrificing themselves, out of affection, pity, tolerance, fair play and love: or when I see an innocent smile spreading on the bright face of a child; or when I listen to the stream gurgling its way through green, green fields or to birdsong in a lonely wood; when I try to forget everything in the half-light of dawn or sunset; when I gaze at the stars shining brightly on a dark night and long to venture forth into some inaccessible land; when I think of some great sage lost in contemplation on the crest of a high mountain, for ever searching for something; when I see the faith and inspiration in the sayings of great men and the grandeur and beauty of their lives, I find it difficult to expect defeat from life. I don't lose my faith in noble ideals."

Many of us value these and similar things as students - nature, human grace, nation, culture and so on. Conscious concern for them, however, soon fades and recedes. A kind of way of saying this is, "outgrowing one's adolescent dreams." Naginbhai was conscious of this danger; when reminded of his tendencies, he explained:—

> "In my letters from Burma, when I expressed my emotions, I really did not mean to dream away my life. What I did was just to give freedom to my emotions which are so much restricted in and by this present materialistic environment. I confess and do believe that this materialistic world and that world of Mother Nature are not separate — are not two distinct worlds. But I fear that this world which we call materialistic, and which is very much with us, controls our mode of living to a greater degree to-day than it should. It so often clouds our minds, thus breaking the harmony in our lives. To get freedom from its chains we must give freedom to our emotions; of course those which are balanced and human."

And this is how he remained and grew — an open-eyed

idealist, a ratiocinating escapist and a soft-spoken revolutionary. When in Fergusson College, he worried about a library for young boys which he helped to run near his Ghatkopar home; read Gide, Zweig, listened to Rabindra Sangeet, and 'discovered' small lakes in the Western Ghats.

At Oxford, he steeped himself in European music; and, indeed, actively participated in it. He was an active member of the Oxford Film Society; tried to give his fellow students some direct ideas about India by giving them books and records, and by arranging documentary film shows. He took in the countryside round Oxford on his bicycle.

He wrote home about his meeting with three small children in a bus in Ireland. They kept looking at him and his beard for a long time. "Would you like to know where I come from?" he asked them. "Yes please". "I come from India. It is very far from here." Then the youngest child piped up "Is it nice there, *in India?" This is the kind of experience he remembered and* noted — anything which rewarded his search for simplicity, beauty and affection.

Apart from the usual academic courses, therefore, Naginbhai's intellectual capacities were moulded by what can only be described as self-education. He selected certain types of information to digest and sought out certain varieties of cultural experiences to absorb. In his work at the University, temperamentally, he never proved a good examinee, however well his professors or tutors thought of him. This only added to his efforts to equip himself more widely and deeply.

To those of us, friends who liked to talk, he meant one of the best audiences; he would never seem to contradict; but at the end of many conversations, one realised that one had rethought or reformulated some basic concept, hitherto taken for granted. In these and many other ways, he fashioned himself into an instrument of analysis and action which eventually found its fullest use in Sarvodaya.

April, 1963.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS

The following distinguished men who had known Nagin not very intimately, wrote their appreciations, which are not quoted in full because they repeated, amongst them, characteristics elsewhere pointed out and described.

U. N. DHEBAR, one of the most highly respected of the Congress Party veterans, who headed the Commission which was appointed by the Government of India to recommend means of securing the welfare of the tribal people in the process of transition which is absorbing India. Among his remarks, the following are outstanding:

"Nagin . . . really lived for a cause and died for it. I envy him for his life as well as his death".

13 December, 1961

Y. N. SUKTHANKAR had belonged to the I.C.S.; but, at the date of writing, 5th January 1962, was the Governor of Orissa. He had previously been, for some considerable period, the principal private secretary to the Prime Minister, the late Jawaharlal Nehru.

B. VENKATAPPIAH is probably best known as the Chairman of the Reserve Bank of India. He met Nagin in Orissa, where he was touring, some years previous to his letter, which is dated 13th December, 1961. He remarks on "the obvious affection the villagers of Koraput . . . had for" Nagin.

B. PATNAIK became Chief Minister while the Boipariguda Pilot Project was struggling along. He wrote with strong personal sympathy for Nagin's difficult position as the executive in charge of a Project in which he never attained any legal authority. His letter was dated 4th February, 1962.

Extract from letter to Nagin's brother

H. D. HUGHES

Principal, Ruskin College, Oxford

Though it is nearly ten years since . . (Nagin) . . . . was a student at Ruskin, I remember him well. His quiet friendliness, sincerity of purpose and sense of mission won him many friends in the college. I am glad to think that, short as his life was, he was able to do such good work in a Project so near to his heart. If we were able to teach him anything that proved useful or helpful to him in this work, we are very proud to have a small share in his achievement. He has certainly done his part to fulfill the aims of those who founded this College.

H. D. Hughes is Vice-President of the (British)Workers' Educational Association, besides holding the principalship of the college in Nagin's time then, and now.

Extract from the editorial feature "Trends and Topics" in the "Indian Express" dated Tuesday, 5th December, 1961:

NAGIN PAREKH:

While expressing his sense of gratitude for the unusual services of Mr. Nagin Parekh at a condolence meeting held in Bombay, Mr. G. D. Parikh, Rector of the Bombay University aptly observed that mankind rarely honours its silent benefactors. Nagin Parekh who died at the age of 35 in the *Adivasi* region of Orissa was a noble example of youthful idealism in this land.

His short but fruitful life should convince the cynics that the tradition of selfless service can be revived as a constructive force. Born in a wealthy Gujerati home, educated at Oxford University, Nagin could have rapidly climbed the social ladder. He, however, thought otherwise and decided to place his intellectual and educational equipment at the disposal of Acharya Vinoba Bhave.

Nagin Parekh adopted the backward *Adivasi* area of the Koraput district as his field of work. Following the *gramdan* of 800 villages in Koraput, Sarva Seva Sangh decided to launch the Boipariguda pilot project for the integrated socio-economic development of a backward community in a tribal area. The Government of Orissa provided the Sangh with funds for the project which covered a population of 25,000.

The depth of poverty in this region could be gauged from the fact that only a "well-to-do family" could afford to eat rice at both meals of the day throughout the year. Nagin Parekh worked hard to make his project a success. The *Adivasis* are particularly grateful to him for the rural credit and co-operative society started by him which has made a perceptible impact on their way of life.

THE BUD THAT BLOOMED

G. D. PARIKH

I first came to know Nagin as a student of my B.A. Economics class in the Ramnarain Ruia College. He came to us from the Fergusson College, Poona; I never knew why. But from the beginning, he seemed to us to be out of the ordinary. He was humble and well-behaved, keen and regular, disciplined and purposeful. He spoke little and never sought to impress; and yet being quite developed and mature in his responses, he seemed naturally to command attention and respect. During the two decades or so for which I worked as a teacher, I met very few like him.

In the conventional scholastic abilities and attainments, Nagin was a little above the average. The usual yardsticks in this respect are however known to be rather dubious. We seldom thought of Nagin in terms of a "class" in the examination, for he seemed to belong to a different kind of classification. All along I felt that he had come for education rather than for the degree. In fact, with his sober enthusiasm and quiet determination, he was perhaps engaged in a search for something worthy of dedication.

Nagin took the B.A. examination and left us. I did not hear about him thereafter for quite some time. In a casual conversation with a colleague several months later, when we were trying to recall students who interested us, I mentioned him and accidentally learnt that he had joined Ruskin College at Oxford. This further stimulated my interest. I gathered that the family came from Burma and was engaged in business. It was a tribute

G. D. Parikh is professionally a teacher of economics and is now Rector of Bombay University.

to their understanding and tolerance that Nagin was free to pursue his own inclinations. From what little we knew of him, we seemed to agree that business was no field for him, although with some of the qualities he possessed, I believe he could have been as much of a success in business as anyone else.

SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS:

A few years later, Nagin dropped in at my residence. We were delighted to see each other. I was particularly happy that after years of absence of contact, he still remembered me and had taken the trouble to come in. I almost said as much. Nagin told me of his studies in Oxford, of his work and experiences on the Continent, and of his work in Saurashtra on return from Europe, in the field of International Youth Exchange. He then spoke of his having met Vinobaji who advised him to take an interest in the *Gramdan* Movement. He had agreed to do so. At this stage, he asked how I felt about his decision. This was indeed a difficult question. It was neither possible to evade nor to answer it.

While I was appreciative of the *Bhoodan* Movement, I was a little doubtful about its eventual outcome. But my real difficulty arose from my little knowledge and experience of workers in the constructive fields. Such information as I had, told me that they got frustrated and even distorted when the results of their work were not commensurate with their efforts. But there was, on the other hand, the commitment he had made which prevented me from raising any doubts. The answer to his question, I remember, was a counter question: "What do you expect to come out of it?" I asked, and his reply which has since then stuck in my memory was:

"I do not know. I have to try. Maybe, something will come out of it in the end, maybe nothing. I cannot say." That was I felt a basically sound and healthy reaction. In a moment I realized that nothing wrong could happen to him and all my doubts became just irrelevant. I said with confidence: "By all means try. Go ahead with your plan; it is excellent." I

wondered whether he was in need of reassurance. But he was happy. Nagin and I became friends and I looked upon him and his work with respect and had several discussions with him about it thereafter.

After Nagin started his work with the Pilot Project in Koraput, we used to meet whenever he came to Bombay, which was generally once a year. Many topics figured in our conversations, including his work, the progress he was making in it and the difficulties he encountered. My understanding of the latter was obviously hazy, for I was entirely unfamiliar with the area, its people and their living conditions. I was therefore mostly a passive listener. What impressed me was the fact that he continued to be as keen and determined as ever, and was in no way discouraged by the difficulties he had to encounter in carrying on his work.

There were occasions however when the talk would take a different turn. These arose when we turned to any of the theoretical implications of the experiment. I remember on one occasion our having spent quite some time in discussing the view that the tribal people, since they were collectivistic in outlook, could be more easily induced to accept the cooperative way for their development and progress. The view, I was told, was fairly popular in some Sarvodaya circles and it also perhaps furnished the basis of the Koraput experiment. I was however sceptical.

A movement with a reasonably developed individual as its very foundation cannot possibly flourish in a group collectivistic in the pre-individualistic sense, a group in which the very concept of the individual is absent. Nagin ably argued the opposite case but was never dogmatic; he even conceded some of the weaknesses in his argument. After arguing for some time, we concluded on the note that the position might usefully be tested in the field, in terms of practical activity and experience, and that since he was actually engaged in such activity, it was better to leave the discussion inconclusive at that stage.

It is a tragedy too deep for words that our discussion can never be concluded. I must however admit that the contributions

of Nagin to the other side of the argument have been significant. Many outstanding people in the country as also from abroad saw his work and all of them appreciated warmly his qualities of head and heart which carried it ahead. With Nagin, Koraput was a laboratory of social experimentation.

His departure at the age of thirty four, in the prime of youth, is a loss bound to be felt in a poignant manner. For me, it has been something of a bereavement. The consolation, if any, can only be found in the feeling that he lived a life which can not only inspire but also provide steady and never-failing spiritual sustenance.

October, 1963.

HUMILITY AND THE *ELITE*

EVELYN WOOD

Nagin's death has deprived us of a force which is rare in India, and probably anywhere in the world today. The trend is for vast majorities of people to become faceless masses. The function of the *elite*, as they see it, is to do their thinking for these masses. Alas, this attitude has infected the proclaimed self-development of tribal and other rural people in India.

Rule by the ballot may have been a reality once. There is not much sign of it anywhere today. Not only the politicians act, with their bureaucracies and other advisers, as a directing *elite*. In every business, as well as government, this trend applies. Above all, the physical scientists—except the very few who still remain both profound and wide thinkers—claim to set the methods of thought for everyone else.

Scientific restriction to measurement and its rejection of intuitive and subjective knowledge has already poisoned the content of education. But there is a larger proportion of dissident academics than in any other profession. Mercifully, our education still clings obstinately to much of its non-scientific content. The strongholds of Oxford and the Sorbonne are still of high repute—and some influence.

In India, though, we badly need a balanced University, in the true sense of the term. Here, beyond all parts of the world, we should be able to build for future generations by fusing modern

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Evelyn Wood, editor of this volume, Royal Navy, 1914 War, qualified engineering in its surplus period. Hence: lorry-driver, journalist, textile and other bulk commerce in India. Last employed advertising. Now consultant in Communications; field rural India.

and ancient scientific method. The direct approach of *gnyana yoga* can be reconciled with the confined analyses of objective, modern science.

Nagin Parekh was one of the very few young men whom I have come across with this synthesizing capacity. There must be others; but they are the persons who do not seek power or publicity. We have certainly had our share of such persons in the immediate past of this scientific and technological age. Again, they have been the ones who were content to limit their sphere of action, and to resist being advertised.

We deify our Ramans and our Vishveshvarayas, but we do not use their balanced grasp of technology and intuition, prompted by the knowledge accumulated in India's past. It is equally doubtful if western civilizations will use the synthesis of insight and scientific knowledge represented by a Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Among the highly educated here, we must still have others who are kept away from power by a combination of two factors; their own nausea for the forms which holding power imposes; and the reluctance of those in the uneasy seats of power to admit superior minds.

Although I am over thirty years older than he, I owe a new confidence in the future to Nagin. He seemed still to make the way ahead reasonably clear. Are there no other young men who can free themselves equally from the dead hand of fifth-rate science and the ritual obeisance to "our ancient traditions", which has no feeling whatever to back it? There must be! But there cannot be many who have Nagin's acceptance of power for others, without either personal desire or nausea for it.

Nagin's family must obviously have influenced his thinking. I do not know where or how he acquired his Gandhian idealism; but his education was obviously sufficiently scientific in content and method to balance it. A realism drawn from the wisdom of the past as well as science, and as impersonal as his idealism, made Nagin's work effective. Above all, he cared for those less fortunate than himself more than he cared to talk about it! I quote from his many letters with some difficulty. Here is some-

thing from March, 1958:

We have learnt . . that our activity could be meaningful only to the extent that it educates local people . . (the tribal people of the villages where he lived) . . in the ways and means of solving their problems. How naive had we been to believe that the responsibility of bringing a new social order rests wholly on us!

. . We have failed so far . . . the cause of it lies nowhere but in our own immature understanding and faulty approach. Isn't it natural for any people to resist . . institutions and programme which fail to seek identification with their emotions?

. . . .

No rural worker can for long afford to rely on associations and inspiration from (the) outside world. It is from the life of the people itself that he shall . . . seek new avenues of education.

And from November 1960:

The past four years in . . Koraput . . made me somewhat shock-proof (against) Indian conditions of development. I am keen . . however . . (for) a detached sense of earnestness within me.

These extracts contain both insight, of the traditional kind, and scientific analysis in the modern sense. An astonishing maturity is suggested in the latter. In these days when we all endlessly criticize public measures and the persons who support them, it is rare to find a tolerance like Nagin's.

Oxford must take some of the credit for shaping Nagin's mind; but it could hardly have given him that fortitude of the spirit—which alas, caused him to overtax his body and leave us. Here was an unusual situation; a young man back from Oxford decides to bury himself in a tribal village. He does not do this to write learned papers and become an authority. His qualifications have their promise, and clearly place him with the younger *elite*. Instead, he chooses to perform a service, and to cultivate his own scientific disciplines while doing so. This way is perhaps the oldest of all traditions in India. The Buddha is our

international example.

I believe that the first of my extracts gives evidence for Nagin's highly individual motives. It was not so much the pull of traditional service, nor his idealism which held him to his village folk. It was the knowledge that he was learning from them how to live in adverse conditions. It is possible that Nagin had enough of the ascetic in him to make this a sufficient aim; but I doubt it. I think it was the thirst for educating himself that held him to an otherwise unrewarding task. Which of us "educated" people has that humility, with an insatiable desire for truth?

This is why Nagin still inspires me. I must believe that there are more in India who find their adventure in themselves and their relations with the world—not merely this tellurian world. We need to be less avid of prominence and competitive success. We need to eschew "conquests" of Himalayan peaks and outer space. The tradition of India is to adventure within the infinite and forbidding expanses of the human spirit, in its eternal aspect.

The failures of the past to fulfil this tradition effectively may probably have been due to concentration on the self. When personal cultivation and service to others are mutual ways of seeking love and truth, as they were with Nagin, we have a constructive use of the best that is India. His rare combination of developed qualities made him intellectual and intuitive, brave and undefeatable, knowledgeable and modest.

Long may Nagin's free spirit live to inspire us to more of such humble search and action, in order to help those who cannot belong to our *elite* to free themselves from their new dependence.

July 1962

FAMILY RECOLLECTIONS

DHANANJAY M. PAREKH

Unforgettable as a child, Nagin was my younger brother. Our mother died when we were very young, and her loss gave to Nagin's short life a sadness which was his constant companion. Our father's abundant love filled more of the childish world for the rest of us. For Nagin, however, the world often appeared to be incomplete. . . but not always.

Father was a lover of nature and peace. Our childhood was spent at Akyab, in Burma. There father would wake us up early in the morning, and we would walk on the seashore. Nagin was the sensitive child, for whose wonder the birds sang and the trees danced; he would be fascinated by the shifting patterns of the clouds. On looking back it seems to me that Nagin's quiet temperament, as an adult, and his capacity for absorption in natural surroundings were already revealed during those far-off years before the 1939 war in Burma.

Our family had fairly strong, middle-class Hindu traditions. We were formally a joint family, with a distinct streak of adventure in its record. Twenty five years ago, however, we did not profess a "modern outlook"; we were not what is today called "progressive". Adventurous joint-families are part of the Gujerati—particularly; perhaps, the Saurashtra—tradition.

Of course, a social unit such as our family, which contains both the active drive of adventure and the mutual security built-in as a tempering or restrictive agent, must occasionally cause pressures on the individual. There is no doubt that Nagin felt the strain, and he could find relief from it only when he took up his further education at Oxford. Possibly the restlessness

which he showed as a child was an indicator of the mental energy which had to flow in the channels of academic scholarship.

As he grew older, Nagin became quieter. The quietness was probably an outer aspect of his introversion. There was a charming humility in his manner, especially when he was approaching comparative strangers. Within the family he was a very loving member. His love for father almost reached a stage of reverence. Indeed, Nagin sometimes appeared to me to regard as his principal purpose in life the achievement of father's expressed wishes. I feel strongly that the intensity with which Nagin projected himself into the service of others was largely for the fulfilment of father's desire that someone of our family should become outstanding as a useful and constructive member of the society in which we lived—or, better still, to Society at large.

From his school days it was clear that Nagin was a good organizer. He would manage and run a library common to his friends and himself, or he would just as easily take on the leadership and cope with all the details for a weekend trip or a social function. His ability for planning and capacity of devotion to whatever he undertook were, I think I may say quite objectively, remarkable from his early adolescence.

Within his family we shall always remember the love and the depth of understanding which Nagin had for all of us. Indeed, his capacity for love overflowed beyond the world of his relations; he was most considerate of everyone, helpful to all, and invariably careful not to give anyone trouble. This intense care for the comfort of others, naturally enough, caused Nagin some suffering on occasion; but he stuck to his attitude of love as a way of life.

Nagin wrote with great ease. He had his own penetrating style, with which to convey both information and analyses as well as his ideas. His letters were always more than welcome. In fact we used to wait for them with great eagerness, when he was writing from Europe. When his letters from abroad arrived, they were shared by many of us. Unfortunately, in the later

years of his Indian Odyssey, worry and the pressure of work prevented him from writing all the letters that we should have liked. Whenever he visited us, he would complain that he just could not cram all his new experience into personal correspondence.

He was an enthusiastic traveller, with a lively curiosity, and a strong preference for avoiding the services of a guide! During his vacations from Oxford, Nagin had opportunities to satisfy his *wanderlust* to his heart's content. In Lapland as well as in the Swiss Alps, he went to play in the snow. He travelled widely in Scandinavia, where he joined the International School of Social Sciences at Elsinore for one Summer Course. At Orjansgarden in Sweden, he stayed for a spell of training with Mr. Hoffman of the International Refugee Training Centre. He participated in the internationally famous Youth Railway in Yugoslavia. In Austria, Italy and Spain, he made many friends, in whose companionship he evidently delighted. When he came back to India, he took the overland route to Basra, crossing Greece, Turkey, Lebanon and part of Iran.

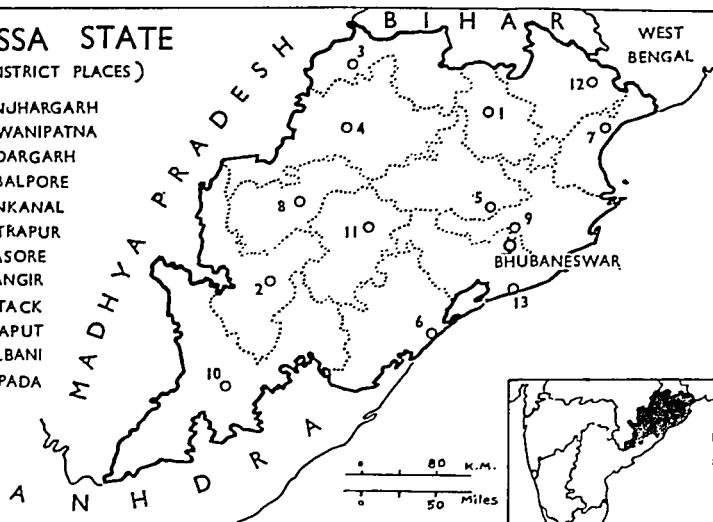
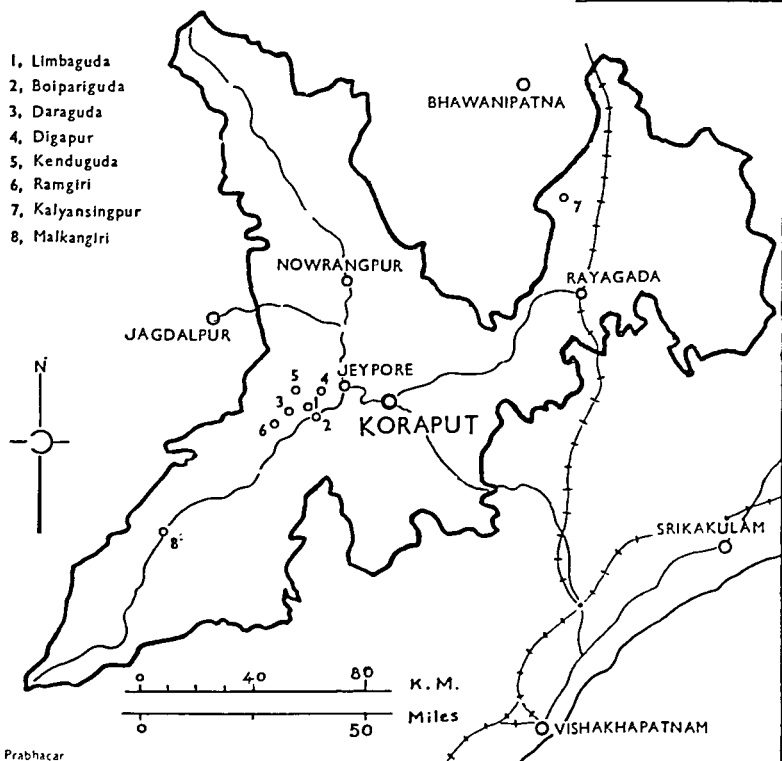
As a brother, his love is one of my most precious memories. Its continuing presence with me is a positive inspiration and also an armour against everyday trials and tribulations. Even when Nagin did not agree with anyone, he respected the contrary view and the person who expressed it. Nothing could prevent him from maintaining his warm affectionate feelings within the family; neither teasing nor opposition arguments. Above all, Nagin's love for children quite overwhelmed him; I think he preferred their company to that of grown-ups! When he was with children all his introspective worries as well as his external problems seemed to fade out. The children's feeling for him was only too clear: they missed him badly when he went away, and were ecstatic when he came back to them.

Perhaps this observation of Nagin's way with children may contain an explanation of his happy relationships with the tribal people of Orissa.

July 1964.

PART 3

From Nagin's own Pen

ORISSA STATE
(DISTRICT PLACES)
1, KEONJHARGARH
2, BHAWANIPATNA
3, SUNDARGARH
4, SAMBALPORE
5, DHENKANAL
6, CHATRAPUR
7, BALASORE
8, BOLANGIR
9, CUTTACK
10, KORAPUT
11, PHULBANI
12, BARIPADA
13, PURI
BIHAR
WEST BENGAL
MADHYA PRADESH
ANHDRA
BHUBANESWAR
80 K.M.
50 Miles
400 K.M.
KORAPUT PLACES
1, Limbaguda
2, Boipariguda
3, Daraguda
4, Digapur
5, Kenduguda
6, Ramgiri
7, Kalyansingpur
8, Malkangiri
BHAWANIPATNA
NOWRANGPUR
RAYAGADA
JAGDALPUR
JEYPORE
KORAPUT
N
SRIKAKULAM
VISHAKHAPATNAM
0 40 80 K.M.
0 50 Miles
Prabhacar

FROM NAGIN'S OWN PEN

The following are close selections from articles written by Nagin and a few of his letters, other than those written to the Editor of the volume which have been printed next to the Editorial Introduction, in order to illustrate particular points.

It is hoped that these extracts will give some impression of the way in which Nagin's experience deepened between 1951-61, whilst his fundamental attitude remained unchanged, except for a refinement of sensitivity, and more capacity to define what exactly were his purposes.

As far as possible, the exact words which Nagin wrote have been recorded here; but there is some considerable editing by way of omissions, both in his letters and two examples of what he wrote for publication.

Extract from letter to Annasaheb Sahasrabudhe, undated but evidently sometime in August or September 1957:

Whomsoever I saw in Bombay or in Sanosara, of those who had visited us none was happy about organization, and all were dismayed by the lack of clarity in our thinking. Similar impressions were also carried by Sri Balwantrai Mehta and Dhebarbhai, as Manubhai came to know from them when he visited Delhi this month. Manubhai told me frankly that he was interested in our project only if we accepted and proceeded with scientific

planning, not otherwise. He had somehow gathered the impression that, in Koraput at present, people with different voices (and sometimes. . . noises) have been pulling the project into directions dictated by their individual whims and biases.

In this way, he thought, we should be creating a confused picture both in the minds of the workers as well as in those who have come from outside to watch this experiment sympathetically. Even more tragic would be the loss of trust in us and in a better living by the local people.

He said further that, if our resources are insufficient, let us select only three areas, so that a different approach could be adopted in each. In one, only 'humanitarian' work, such as giving medicines, education and relief would be carried out; in another, there would be partial planning; while, in the third, comprehensive all-round planning would be implemented. "Surely", he said, "people are not going to believe in our excuses, if with so many advantages on our side, we fail to present a hopeful and scientific picture of development in the end".

Manubhai thinks that it would be difficult for us to work out our plans fully, if we do not succeed in re-orientating the State Administration in our favour.

On the other hand, Mr. Wood and the Zinkins, while reiterating the general impressions mentioned above, thought that our workers would do better to learn something about the law. During their recent trip to the Koraput, the Zinkins were surprised and sorry to find that there was much confusion and lack of knowledge of law in our accusations against the Administration.

Mr. Wood further made these two observations. He thought that quite a few of the workers in Koraput are more of a liability to the project than a help. The Zinkins, who were also present, included the majority of women workers they had met in this category. The problem, as Mr. Wood put it, was to dilute the unhelpful influence of these workers on the communities with which they live without hurting their (worker's) feelings.

His second point was that there is a fluctuating concentration

on different aspects of the project. A problem comes to the forefront and suddenly all interest and attention are concentrated on it. The problem in question recedes to the background; and, with equal suddenness, the interest fades away from it only to be diverted to an emerging problem. In this process, care is not being taken to record in concrete terms the outcome of this ever-changing interest and attention.

Consequently, when that problem reappears, instead of covering new ground in decision-making, the same beaten track is travelled again, gaining little in the end. This fact is also partly responsible for confusion in thinking.

Mr. Wood summed up his observations with the sad remark that his letters to you and Persaiji have been left unreplied, and that nothing is heard from you regarding what he thinks his very important suggestion of strengthening this health and hygiene side of our programme. By the way, a similar complaint was sounded by Manubhai.

On learning from me of some of the weaknesses of our project, Mahendra Desai (Asst. Editor '*Times of India*') had the following suggestion to make. "For selection of workers you should conduct special training camps each year of, say, six months duration. Then you should reorientate 30-35 workers in philosophical, economic, social and other aspects of the total project, and without any guarantee of keeping them if they do not come up to the standard. If you have not with you at the moment people who would undertake this job of training workers, you should select a few of your workers, and get them trained so that they can train others in their turn . . . Your immediate aim should be to create a special cadre of workers capable of carrying out your projects with understanding and application. They should both be missionary and scientific in their approach, both village-minded and countrywide in their outlook. Unless you succeed in doing this there is but little hope for *Bhoodan* carrying us much forward."

Feeling that these observations would be helpful to us, more so because of their critical yet sympathetic nature, I have deemed

it wise to pass them to you. In a way, it is heartening that our project should thus be continually evaluated by people highly qualified to do so. That makes our mission all the more interesting and educative.

Part of paper written for GRAMDAN, *a monthly Journal published by the ABSSS from Jeypore, Koraput District, Volume II No. 7, March 1958.*

PROBLEM OF CREDIT IN A BACKWARD ECONOMY

It became evident during follow-up work in the *Gramdan* villages of Koraput that any programme of integrated development was not going to make much headway in the absence of some form of institutionalized credit that could provide cheap and speedy loans to the cultivators. It has been a tragic experience of the aborigine (*adivasi*) in this area that whenever he has attempted to improve his conditions by way of making his plot of land more productive, the trader or the money-lender has invariably cast his evil eye on the fruit of his labour and tried, by all foul means, to grab it. Besides his social backwardness this is one primary factor which has curbed the incentive of the *adivasi* to better his lot.

The realization of this fact on the part of the Sarva Seva Sangh was coupled, ironically enough, with the existence of certain legal bottlenecks which invalidated a *Gramdan* village from receiving any credit facilities from the official agencies, such as the Co-operative Banks and Panchayat Grain *Golas*. By declaring *Gramdans*, these villages had further unwittingly disrupted, if not cut off, the flow of credit emanating from moneylenders and other exploitative agencies.

Their need for credit was, however, real and the problem of avoiding a set-back to their morale and communal psychology was urgent.

The situation, critical as it was, compelled the Sarva Seva Sangh to attempt to fill the vacuum and act as a credit agency in some selected *Gramdan* areas of the district where it had already brought in its development machinery. The funds at the disposal of this non-official organization were necessarily limited for the purpose. In this attempt, however, some useful experience was gained which helped to point out more clearly the direction of the development efforts.

The observations and suggestions appearing in the following lines flow from some such experience gathered at one of the Development Centres, namely Limbaguda, organized by the Sarva Seva Sangh in Koraput.

Out of about 5,000 families which are covered by the Boipariguda police station area, nearly 1,800 reside in *Gramdan* villages. Of these, 1,136 families availed themselves of the credit facilities given by the Sarva Seva Sangh on a co-operative credit basis. 3,204 Mds. of paddy and 664 Mds. of mandia were given on loan in kind. Again, 88 bullocks worth about Rs. 5,200/- were given as outright grant to the *Gramsabha* (the village organization) which in turn, distributed them on loan basis to the individual cultivators. Moreover, through the development activities at Limbaguda, where soil-conservation was completed on 150 acres of land, the *Gramsabha* received from the wages of the labourers 12% contribution towards its fund. The sum of Rs. 1,000/- which had been accumulated in this manner was subsequently given on loan to the most needy families. On the whole, the average borrowings of each of these 1,136 families from the Sarva Seva Sangh came to Rs. 31·07. The services of four workers attached to the Sangh were spared for these operations on a promotional basis. It is, however, intended that, as soon as some experience is gained, the organizational side of this activity will be operated by a co-operative framework.

An enquiry was conducted, at the time of the recovery of loans, into the economic conditions of 78 families. A further intensive enquiry was made about 45 families, seeking to find out their total borrowings during the past year, the actual

purpose of borrowings, the credit agencies serving their needs, and the rates of interest charged by them. Selection of these 45 families was based on the principle of random sampling.

The agencies which supply credit have been classified into seven groups, viz. Government, *Panchayat* Grain *Gola*, Relatives, Money-lenders, *Gramsabha*, the Sarva Seva Sangh and others.

The data collected in this connection relate to the actual purpose of borrowing. These data were classified according to each credit agency. The loans borrowed by these families were classified into eight broad categories with reference to the purpose of borrowing. These categories include short-term and long-term under each of the three purposes, namely, agricultural, non-agricultural and consumption purposes; the remaining two purposes are repayment of old debts and "other purposes". For the purpose of this enquiry, medium-term loans have been included in the long-term category.

Before detailing the classification adopted for convenience of handling the data, it may be necessary to draw attention to the following basic facts typical of this deficit economy.

1. For a large mass of population, the purposes of borrowing for agricultural operations are few and well-defined. Their cultivation is in a primitive stage and standard of living below the subsistence level.
2. Their pattern of consumption, again, could be described as one of 'from hand to mouth' living, in which purchase of furniture, shoes, bedding etc. do not appear, while educational expenses are conspicuous only by their absence.

All the loans mentioned in this enquiry were borrowed (excepting one long-term loan from the government) with the understanding of their repayment by the following harvest.

Detailed classification of purposes into different types of finance is given below:

1 AGRICULTURAL

Short-Term:	Purchase of seeds Payment of wages Bunding and other land-improvements Purchase of implements Other farm expenses
Long-Term:	Purchase of livestock

2 NON-AGRICULTURAL

Short-Term:	Non-farm, business expenditure on current year
Long-Term:	Non-farm, business expenditure on capital account

3 CONSUMPTION

Short-Term:	Medical expenses Purchase of clothing Marriage, death and other ceremonies Other family expenses

4 REPAYMENT OF OLD DEBTS

5 OTHER EXPENSES

Tables and detailed comments upon their content are omitted from here, onwards. The general conclusions which follow are based upon the sound factual demonstration—by the figures which are omitted—to show several factors outstanding. These are:

Inadequate control, interest rates, security-valuation and enforcement of loan-repayment, by the official administration. Confusion in the laws governing credit co-operatives and statutory recognition of land as property, so that the law could be twisted to suit official, punitive policy.

The difference in behaviour between larger and smaller land-holders as debtors is also thrown up. The former proved to be the defaulters and the latter the group which made an effort to repay its borrowings.

The remainder, as follows, gives the conclusion of Nagin's most valuable paper.

The above figures amply reveal the inadequacy of the maximum credit limit as set by the co-operative societies. It is in no way related to the cost of production of the crops. In fact, the whole attitude of societies is asset-biased; and even where loans are meant to be given against the security of crops, they are advanced with an eye on the cultivator's permanently tangible assets.

How can any credit agency claim to contribute to agricultural reconstruction when it virtually shuts its doors to a vast majority of agriculturists on the ground of their inability to offer any tangible security? Indeed, as far as credit is concerned the farmers' capacity to earn and repay should be the real criterion to determine their credit-worthiness.

In the final analysis, what is of greater importance is the purpose of the credit rather than the amount of the loan. It is the effective linking of credit with purpose that is more significant from the aspect of increasing agricultural production as well as improving the cultivators' lot.

In spite of the fact that the recoveries at this centre have almost hit the cent-per-cent mark, the logic of *Gramdan* does not encourage such extensive relief measures of little permanent value.

In fact, all the efforts to date of the institutionalised credit agencies have at best resulted in their tinkering with the problem of rural credit rather than in an attempt at its solution, And anything less fundamental than an integrated approach to the credit needs of the community may well defy a permanent solution.

In the special context of a backward economy of this area some unorthodox but effective means for providing compre-

hensive credit should be devised without much delay. Although the *Gramdan* movement has succeeded to some extent in creating an atmosphere conducive to the interests of the last man, the process of change in ownership of land from the tribesfolk to families of non-tribal origin remains unchecked in face of exploitative money-lending. One of the unfortunate but natural implications of this trend has been the limited utilization of huge development funds which the Government has allotted for the "uplift" of this area. At some point this vicious circle needs to be broken and that point has long ago been reached.

The approach that can be suggested in light of the experience gained in development and credit activities, and in the special and well-defined context of the backward tribal area, would be one of an integrated and 'supervised' credit system. In relation to the economy of this area Government should aim at eventually building up an administrative machinery for the purpose of turning the non-credit-worthy cultivator into a credit-worthy person, not only by programmes of development such as irrigation for the improvement of his economic status, but also by a system of 'supervised credit'; that is to say by a species of 'Extension' service conceived on a very much larger scale than at present. This would be directed to the class of individual farmer, whose operations, at his present level of efficiency, are below the subsistence mark, and the attempt would be through education in improved methods of technology and by the operation of fostering care and advice on each family-unit separately, to make the families self-supporting and eventually credit-worthy.

An institutional development on part of Government on these lines will have to be on a limited scale to begin with, and in the nature of a promotional activity. Such a pilot project will have the following objectives:

1. To evolve a credit system which will provide cent-per-cent credit needs of the cultivator with a view to his economic rehabilitation.
2. To direct the functioning of the credit system in a manner which will help to attain a minimum level of income for each family during a specified period.

3. To encourage through various educational means the growth of attitudes and institutions conducive to the spirit of co-operation and self-help.

4. To evolve through this experiment norms of a sound, integrated credit policy for rural sector.

The operation of such a pilot project implies, in the first place, linking of the concept of 'supervised' credit with the idea of 'sponsored' co-operative membership of the non-credit-worthy. The State should undertake to sponsor the membership of the non-credit-worthy for co-operative credit societies and should stand guarantee for part or whole of the repayment of the loans obtained. It is obvious that a project of this type will involve additional operational costs just as certain definite risks. But then there are special responsibilities of the State towards areas of marked economic backwardness and any haphazard attempts to mitigate their conditions are not likely to yield any results.

The organizational implications of this pilot project can be broadly visualised as follows:

The area of operation could be confined in the beginning to a Panchayat area in the district which normally covers 500 to 900 families. (about 25,000—45,000 population). The total credit needs of these families may vary in each area depending upon their level of income and also on the area of land available for cultivation. However, for each area, certain norms as regards the credit needs of each family can be worked out on the basis of the two general considerations mentioned above.

The figures for overhead costs and the total requirement of the personnel can roughly be arrived at by taking into consideration three factors, (*a*) number of families, (*b*) the quantum of credit and (*c*) the land under cultivation. To ensure an integrated approach to the problem and a smooth running of the credit system the same personnel will be charged with the responsibility of operating both the co-operative credit and supervising agencies. In compact blocks of *Gramdans* this system will not encounter any special difficulty. A situation can be foreseen where a development agency entrenched in the area will directly

participate in the working of such a credit system. In any case, it will have to be demonstrated that the development, credit and supervision are three prongs of one and the same programme of agricultural rehabilitation.

Taking the specific case of Boipariguda Panchayat area, there are about 500 families in this area holding three to four *thousand acres of cultivated land. The average credit needs of a* family come to Rs. 108.14. In other words the total credit needs of all the families in the area under similar conditions may not exceed Rs. 55,000/-.

The average burden of loan borne by every acre in this case roughly comes to Rs. 13/- to Rs. 18/-. The quantum of loan per acre may, however, indicate an upward movement with increase in development activity. Again, the area of cultivated land itself may increase through the programmes such as soil conservation and reclamation.

In order to secure an effective supervision it may be necessary to employ one supervisor for every 1000 acres of cultivated land. Thus three to four supervisors engaged in the area will be responsible for (*a*) collection of data relevant to planning for better land utilization and preparing family budgets, (*b*) supervising the proper use of the loans borrowed, (*c*) guiding the agriculturists in the improved methods of cultivation and (*d*) advising them regarding purchase and marketing.

Before the credit is given, the development agency may have to be consulted in each case, and once certified by it, the credit may be given in suitable instalments on recommendation by the supervisory staff.

It may not be difficult to work out further details of the total programme once the principle of supervised and integrated credit is accepted as the aim of the institutional credit agency. Without such a programme the possibility of making any real progress in the direction of agricultural rehabilitation in these areas seems rather remote.

Letter from Nagin to the Editor, dated at Limbaguda 8th July 1958:

After an enriching tour of the south, I arrived here last week. On my way I stopped at Jeypore for a day to see Anna and attended a meeting of the so-called executive committee of workers in Koraput. It has all left a sour taste. If you saw the present atmosphere of Dewan's Bungalow you would hardly carry back any optimistic impressions. In absence of a sense of direction and hope for the future it is a psychological wreck. One feels spiritually isolated in once so buzzing a place. I have come to feel that when a tragedy is overwhelmingly big, one loses heart even to suffer.

These things, uninspiring as they are, only seventeen miles from here, have not much affected our plans. Of course, each one of us is aware of our precarious position, but something has made us go deeper both in ourselves and among the people.

If I feel bad at our betrayal to the nation, I rejoice in a small way at the growth of my colleagues in their understanding of the local people and their problems. It is no doubt a slow process, but in this climate of frustration that puts me on the road to hope.

The State Government is in a strange mood and would perhaps be only too pleased to push us out at the first opportunity; however, we are not going to oblige them.

The whole drama appears at times to be too complicated for this small mind. But at no time have we regretted taking this chance of knowing rural India more closely.

Two notes, which bear rather similar titles to other writings of Nagin at the same time, were written during this crucial year, 1958, while the situation between the Government of Orissa and the ABSSS was growing steadily more impossible —from the latter's point of view.

From Amsing, 24th July 1958:

PROBLEM OF ORGANIZING CREDIT IN GRAMDAN VILLAGES

An attempt is made in the following to present an outline of some of the immediate problems involved in the organization of credit. The suggestions which are offered to meet those problems are primarily based on the field experience in Koraput (Orissa). Obviously the present stage of my knowledge about local conditions would not permit me to discern the points of contrast between the conditions obtaining in Koraput and those to be found elsewhere in Orissa. I hope, however, that my proposed visits to the *Gramdan* villages and an exchange of views with local workers, would provide me with an opportunity to revise these suggestions in a way to address them better to the particular conditions of this area.

In countries which are economically better off, credit is largely employed for the progressive development of agriculture and ancillary industries. On the contrary, in a backward economy like our own, rural credit is still a medium of exploitation by money-lenders, who normally leave with the agriculturists nothing but a prospect of marginal existence. The problem is to replace this exploitative credit by an enlightened form. What is important is that the cultivator gets sufficient and cheap credit in good time and also the knowledge of how to make the best productive use of it.

The resources available for credit in our country are not plenty. Even if the sum-total of these resources, private as well as institutional, are simultaneously put to use, they will perhaps not be enough to meet all legitimate needs of the agriculturists. Our aim is, therefore, not to cut short the flow of credit emanating from the money-lending class, but to channelize it in a fashion which offers a fair deal to the cultivator. This could possibly be done if in each *Gramdan* village an effective institutional agency is made to establish itself. Money-lenders could then be persuaded with a promise of sufficient security to give

loans through this agency at a reasonable rate of interest.

Gramdan, if given in the right spirit, makes the formation of a well-knit village organization easier. The *Gramsabha* or the Village Organization can be made a starting point for the institutional credit agency. As there are no Co-operative Societies in this State giving credit in food-grains, a beginning should be made in the *Gramdan* villages with Credit Societies dealing both in cash and kind. The question of registering these societies should be left to a later date after some experience in credit operation is accumulated by workers and the jungle of administrative procedure is thoroughly surveyed.

Below is given a rough idea of the rules which may be observed in running these societies:

(1) All inhabitants of a *Gramdan* village, irrespective of their participation in the act of 'dan', could become members of the society.
(2) The *Gramsabha*, which will be directly responsible for the functioning of the society, will elect a Committee from amongst its members to supervise the day-to-day affairs of the society.
(3) The share that will be required from each member will not exceed 1/10 (both in cash and kind) of his credit requirements.
(4) All loans given for the purpose of seeds, consumption during cultivation period, implements and fertilisers will have to be repaid by the following harvest. The loans given for purchase of bullocks, digging of irrigation wells and channels and bunding of soil will be repaid in three to five years' period in regular instalments.
(5) The loan in kind i.e., food-grains, will bear interest at the rate of 25%, while interest at the rate of 12½% will be charged on cash loans.
(6) Loans other than for purposes mentioned above shall not be given by the society. An exception will be made in this rule when the *Gramsabha* as a unit wants to invest some amount on community land for productive purposes.
(7) Three factors will largely govern the grant of credits:

(*a*) the purpose, (*b*) the area of land tilled by the cultivator for his use and (*c*) his overall capacity to repay. Considering the production of five to seven maunds of paddy per bigha in this region, a cultivator will normally not get a loan which is in value more than five maunds of paddy for every bigha tilled by him. Where the legitimate need of the cultivator outpaces the area of land in his possession, the *Gramsabha* may grant him additional credit only after first making sure of his overall capacity to repay and, further, standing guarantee for the loan issued to him.

(8) All loans will be given in suitable instalments and not necessarily in a lump sum.

(9) In normal circumstances, credit operations for the ensuing year will be started only after all previous loans due by that time have been repaid.

A healthy growth of the institutional credit agency will be ensured only when its *raison d'etre* is fully understood and accepted by the people for whose benefit this system is supposed to have been devised. The degree of this understanding will depend in turn on the genuineness of the *Gramdan* concerned and the capabilities of the worker on the spot. The less the personal factors are allowed to enter into the disbursement of institutional credit, the sounder will be its progress. And perhaps there is no better means of bringing this whole experiment to naught than an irresponsible and bad accounting system.

Credit, like any other activity of life, calls for a process of education. The final shape which we hope to give it may take years, but if it is understood that this activity is a vital instrument for improving the conditions of the agriculturists, we may learn, in course of time, how to use and proceed with it.

From Gauhati, 28th July 1958:

(It should be explained here that Nagin paid a visit to Assam in order

to help some of the ABSSS friends there with his experience of similar rural credit problems to theirs).

PROBLEM OF ORGANIZING CREDIT: SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCEDURE OF WORK.

1. Once a village has been selected for the grant of credit, the worker in charge of that area may give the following understandings to the people who are expected to draw on the credit provided:

(*a*) The *Gramsabha* will bear the total responsibility for the loans, which shall be 'collective' and not 'individual', i.e., a loan will not be granted to any individual resident of the village unless it is sanctioned by the *Gramsabha*.
Before receiving any credit from the Government through the Samagra Seva Sangh the *Gramsabha* will enter into a contract with the S.S.S. to define the date and conditions for repayment.
(*b*) Any grant of loans will be made according to the rules suggested in the note on "problem of organizing credit in *Gramdan* Villages". That implies that this operation will be conducted within the framework of a credit co-operative society. The committee which the *Gramsabha* will form for credit work shall have the Sabhapati as its Chairman and a member as the Secretary.
(*c*) Loans, without exception, must be used for agricultural purposes.
(*d*) As the Government has sanctioned the amount with a specific condition of its repayment in two years' time, all long-term loans, i.e., loans for bullock pairs and irrigation wells and channels, will have to be repaid during that period, viz. two years. All short-term loans, i.e., loans for seeds and consumption, will of course, be repaid by the following harvest.
(*e*) Those who are not in a position to pay their share of the co-operative funds right in the beginning will be allowed to pay it along with the repayment of their loans.

(*f*) All transportation costs will be borne by the *Gramsabha*.

2. After having made these points clear to the people and having secured an acceptance by them, the worker may follow the procedure detailed below:—

(i) Make a survey, family by family, of the credit needs of the village.

(ii) Find out which is the nearest convenient Government grain-*gola* from where the paddy needs of the village could be procured and transported.

(iii) Select a single or at the most two to three suitable places in the village where this paddy could be stored before disbursement.

(*iv*) No disbursement of paddy loans should take place, except in abnormal conditions of weather, before the total stock needed for credit has been brought in the village. To meet some such abnormal situation it would be advisable to give loans in two or three suitable instalments so that no needy family is left unsupplied from the stock at hand.

(v) At the time of disbursement all the members of the credit committee formed by the *Gramsabha* shall remain present and witness the operation. They will also put their signature at the end of each day's work as entered into the books.

(vi) In measuring paddy the same weights will be used both for loaning out and making recoveries.

(vii) Two separate account books will be maintained for issuing loans in paddy and in cash. Both the books, however, shall have one separate page devoted to each family. A specimen copy of the form for either book is attached herewith.*

(viii) For each receipt of a family's share in the co-operative fund, a 'receipt' will be given to the member signed both by the Chairman and the Secretary of the credit committee. Similarly, a receipt will be given against every repayment of loans.

*This form is not reproduced here, nor is the following paragraph of detailed instructions on the use of the two books required

3. A note of caution may be added here. Generally, the structure of our village societies is such as to allow a few individuals to wield disproportionate influence on the rest. This factor, accompanied by our national characteristics of loose social morality, has led to misappropriation of public funds on a large scale, and consequently, to the breaking up of many co-operative societies.

This risk could be minimized if the worker by his persuasive but firm impartiality can check the *Gramsabha* from taking any unfair decision. On the other hand, the worker may find it more paying in the end if he abstains from imposing his will on the *Gramsabha* or from running the whole show. The *Gramsabha* will naturally not feel a sense of responsibility if the worker does anything related to this work without taking it into his confidence.

Letter from Nagin to the Editor, dated 8th September 1958, at Calcutta

My visit to Assam was a rewarding one. I was to assist local workers there in organizing agricultural credit for *Gramdan* villages. Since vastly different conditions prevail there, I found my job immensely interesting and stimulating.

——————tells me that he has written you . . ., or rather about his reactions. Workers from outside are leaving . . . one after the other, invariably embittered and frustrated. ————has left in that frame of mind and so have—————— and—————. Of course, there is a qualitative difference in their reactions. . . .

. . . much too soon . . . to attempt a balanced assessment of the whole project . . . all the more important to keep one's head cool and try to remain a detached yet keen observer. Indeed, it does offer some vital education.

. . . I . . . hope to remain . . . for the next few years . . . I went to Koraput primarily to learn and experiment, and as long as I am not deprived of those conditions, I have no reason to think of running away.

Letter from Nagin to the colleague first referred to, though with his name suppressed, in the letter from Calcutta just quoted, dated 11th September 1958:

. . . . . I . . . promised to reply at length to your two letters . . . You have left Koraput embittered and frustrated and your letters make no secret of your reactions born of these rather unfortunate feelings.

I do not feel inclined to sit on judgement over the events in Koraput, which have been equally painful to all of us. It is too early perhaps to attempt a detached assessment of our work, and quite unfair at this stage . . . fixing blame on different individuals.

I am aware of the fact that majority of those leaving this project have focused their main complaint against Anna, maintaining that his personal limitations have been largely responsible for this particularly poor performance. In spite of my profound admiration and affection for Anna I believe I have watched him with open eyes; and, like others, I too have felt his limitations disturbing at times. But we must not forget that he is a product of that generation which was called upon to adopt altogether different attitudes and methods in public affairs.

Anna got the Koraput assignment chiefly because of his fund of experience and his pragmatic outlook. His grasp of the problems, as we have noticed, has always been good, although light in form of solutions has not come to him equally readily. But one can say to his credit that he has never closed his mind to a new suggestion whatever be its source . . . What is even more

rare among our public figures . . . unlike them, Anna has invariably encouraged aspiring youth to cast its dreams much beyond where his own vision could possibly reach; and he has allowed all freedom to his colleagues . . . under their own steam . . . learn from their own mistakes. A few days with him and one is hardly left in any doubt that he is a teacher *par excellence.*

It was probably in the very hope that his young colleagues would make up for his own shortcomings that Anna got them together, and embarked on the Koraput project with a youthful zeal and confidence. If his hope was . . . misplaced, we are all no less to be blamed. Our personal rivalries, which often led to a blind rejection of other points of view, and our smug complacency, which was matched only by our ignorance of the local conditions, were some of the very many factors which Anna found himself incapable to control.

Even if you consider him morally responsible, I feel it would be wrong to direct your criticism personally at him. Any objective criticism of an individual's actions and opinions is undeniably a different thing from criticism of a personal nature which reflects bad taste. I am not trying to explain away things nor must you imagine that I am holding a brief for Anna. But I do wish that we could resist the temptation of looking now for a scapegoat. It is so unbecoming. Certainly, I on my part have no desire whatsoever to disown my share of responsibility for the unhappy result we have obtained in Koraput.

You have come to think of Koraput as a lost cause, and have therefore invited me to give up that fight for a fruitful life in the Kulu Valley. I do not think that I would be happy even in heaven if I were to escape like that. Believe me, I am not casting any aspersions on your . . . . . the Kulu Valley, but to follow you would be a blunder for me. In your personal growth you have perhaps reached a phase where you can hope to fulfil your better self more easily in an abode of serene peace and natural beauty. I must confess, however, that my spiritual experiences have not been as sublime as yours, and my strivings are not as intense. My beliefs too are somewhat different. To me Koraput and Kulu Valley are only two facets of the same

life. I need not reject one in order to appreciate the other, since, for me the fun lies in accepting life in its fullness.

I have entered the field of social work not because of the personal attraction of any individual nor for the sake of the Bhoodan movement. I have got into the ring rather of my own accord, fascinated by its promise of adventure. What throws a challenge before me are the stimulating social and economic problems of our land. As long as they are there, I am in the field of my choice. I went to Koraput primarily to learn and experiment, and until I am not deprived of those conditions I am not looking forward to a long period of study and silent work. That, and at present that alone, provides me my *raison d'etre.*

If I were you I should not look back over to my Koraput days with regret. In any case, you would agree that we had a fine education. And if you cannot get over the feeling of being a loser in the game, I trust you could at least raise yourself to a level where one is prepared to lose without rancour.

I have not forgotten my word to visit you in the North, and to have in your company a few ramblings in the enchanting Kulu Valley. I shall try to come . . . at the earliest opportunity.

STOCK-TAKING AT LIMBAGUDA

Extract of a report in which Nagin and his colleagues at Limbaguda make an assessment of their work, as it stood at the end of 1958. This is a document in two parts, dated respectively 3rd December 1958 and New Year 1959:

PART I:

The queries we posed to ourselves were:-

Where does our work stand in terms of actual gains to the people? In what measure are we justified in channelizing public funds as we have been doing? How far will it be proper to consider these activities as experiments in Rural Development?

Looking at the trend of activities undertaken by Sarva Seva Sangh at Limbaguda, one would perhaps be discouraged from expecting any programme of integrated rural development . . . in the near future.

Credit, by and large, holds the central position. However, in the absence of any effective scheme of better land-use and increased production, it has become more a relief programme than an instrument for rehabilitation.

The area covered by these operations is extensive and the number of families large. Nearly a thousand families sprinkled over an area of approximately 500 sq. miles are gradually learning to look up to this agency as a steady, if not adequate, source of obtaining loans . . . . . . communication access to some villages is made all the more difficult by their being situated in remote interiors of the hilly forests. All this, accompanied by certain local attitudes and the low level of education requires an organization bigger in size than would perhaps be . . . necessary in a relatively advanced area.

Presently, an engineering trainee, an agricultural trainee and five local (multi-purpose) workers have been giving a full six months in every year to organizing the operations. They work from three suitably located points, and their salary bills for this period constitute roughly six per cent of the total lendings. Their previous experience in this field is next to nothing, and their understanding of the importance and scope of credit in rural development is as yet partial. Efficiency of a high degree could not be claimed for this organization. This is mainly due to the failure in training the workers concerned in the systematic keeping of accounts.

All the loans issued are on short-term basis, excepting one for livestock which is repayable in three to five equal annual instalments. The amount of the loans is as under:

1.	Paddy	2,150 maunds*
2.	Ragi	500 ,,

*A "maund" is roughly 82 2/7 lb.

3. Cash (Short-term) Rs. 4,500
4. Cash (Medium-term) Rs. 2,500

Over 80 per cent of the borrowers are farmers with uneconomic holdings, or tenant-cultivators. The experience of the Sarva Seva Sangh with this section of agriculturists during the first year of operation was reasonably satisfactory. It is not unlikely, however, that some of them at least had to contract loans from other available agencies, or even to go occasionally hungry, in order to repay loans obtained from this non-official agency.

A sort of moral pressure was brought to bear upon them at that time through newly-formed *Gramsabhas*. *Gramdan*, however, has suffered a setback in the meanwhile, and along with it has vanished, even if temporarily, the promise of a conscious community-feeling. Whatever willingness on the part of the community to take joint responsibility for loans made to the village might have then existed, is now seen to be shaken. On the other hand the pre-occupation of workers with the organizational aspect of the activity has prevented them from following up a sustained programme of community education through meetings and direct contacts.

Lastly, consequent upon the understanding reached between the Sarva Seva Sangh and the State Government, a re-organization of this activity is being attempted within the framework of the registered *Panchayat* Grain *Gola* Co-op. Credit Societies. Association of the Sarva Seva Sangh with the Co-op. administration, although based on a tolerable degree of understanding, leaves much to be desired as far as the interests of the cultivator are concerned.

All this raises certain vital questions. Considering the nature and scale of their activity can the workers at Limbaguda be expected to bring about an attitudinal change in the people? What are the guarantees for survival of the economic organization which we and they are striving to build up? All their thinking is presently directed towards the search of these guarantees. Obviously on its outcome would depend the success or failure of their efforts.

LIMBAGUDA
3rd December 1958

PART II:

(Second and Final instalment of the note on the work at Limbaguda)

A PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF KORAPUT GRAMDANS

Answers to some of the questions raised earlier could perhaps be sought better while projecting the development activities at Limbaguda in their historical perspective. What, for instance, did the Sarva Seva Sangh set out to accomplish in this area? If it occasionally digressed from its original aims, which it seemingly did at times, what were the forces at work that ultimately determined the present nature of the programme?

At the time of Vinobaji's departure from this district the number of *Gramdans* in Limbaguda area had reached . . . about eighty (including the hamlets). Out of these, redistribution of land had taken place in just half that number of villages. The rest had, for one reason or the other, refused to implement the change. Even where the redistribution had occurred, it was by no means equitable, the disparities being as much as in the ratio of 1:5.

In these circumstances, those who were striving for this peaceful revolution had reconciled themselves to considering *Gramdan* as a process rather than a fact. This state of flux was further disturbed by the entry at this stage of some external forces working at cross-purposes with the ideals of *Gramdan*. The Policy of the State Government had shifted with a change in the Ministry. For reasons best known to themselves, they ordered an extensive enquiry into Gramdan . . . in a manner which fixed every donor indirectly as a culprit and every *Bhoodan* worker as an enemy of the established order. In a world where the *Thanadar** is feared next only to the gods of Nature, any insinuation of this kind was bound to have a demoralizing effect on the actual participants in the movement.

*The chief Administrative Officer of the *Thana*, which is a sub-division of a District.

If the State had taken a lead in putting the clock back, the Co-operative Administration did not wish to lag far behind. On the grounds of their having renounced all rights over land, and hence no longer being in possession of any tangible security, the *Gramdani* villages were being refused any grant of loans by the Co-operative credit societies. A paradox was thus brought into play, where the Government was bent on proving all land-gifts as fraud, and Co-operative administration were acting as if all *Gramdanis* had become 'destitutes'.

Whatever benefits of *Gramdan* might have been pointed out to these village folks in a distant future, the impact of these developments in their immediate present was obviously disastrous. To the people, always running a losing race against want, credit had become an inalienable part of their existence.

If the forces external to *Gramdans* were definitely hostile to their growth, the forces at play within *Gramdans* were not very congenial either.

Equipped with an insufficient understanding of the new concept, the local forces that were in the forefront during the heyday of the movement, beat a hasty retreat when they were pressed to a more equitable redistribution of land or when their expectations of anticipated gains failed to materialize.

The Weaknesses of the ABSSS Workers

To this was partly added the unimaginativeness of the workers. In their naivety they were at times guilty of giving irresponsible promises to the people, not being fully aware of the extent of the efforts that would be required to fulfil them. Moreover, because of a difference in emphasis, the workers engaged in '*Vicharprachar*',[1] and those preoccupied with '*Nirman*'[2] work, often formed two separate and irreconcilable wings of the Sarva Seva Sangh in Koraput. Rather poorly equipped, neither wing

[1] The promotion of social and technological reconstruction towards development

[2] development activities

was very effective by itself, and subsequently, the work suffered.

If one of them worked solely for rousing '*Janashakti*',[3] the other worked for Regional development and institutional change. If one lacked in discipline and realism, the other suffered from lack of roots and persistence. To one, development consisted primarily in a change of heart, to the other development was a function of physical resources. Thus conditioned by their preconceived notions, they allowed themselves to be isolated from the currents which actually moulded the sentiments and directed the lives of the local people.

Coming, as they did, fresh from an urban background, the workers at Limbaguda were, from the start, eager to . . . try their notions, somewhat vague, of local leadership and local participation. Their adventures in this direction . . . . . met with the following obstacles:

(*a*) If the problems seeking immediate solutions were mainly agricultural, none of the workers was proficient in that field. Whatever agricultural activities they undertook had only a long-term influence on the immediate problems, and here they failed to educate people in the need of such a long-term programme.

(*b*) As the small retail shops run by traders at weekly *mandis** had become media of extracting high interest on goods purchased on credit, the inhabitants of *Gramdans* were keen to have similar shops opened in their villages. This idea was welcomed by the Sarva Seva Sangh, and for each contiguous group of villages one such shop was helped to come up on a co-operative basis.

It was further hoped that these shops would not only cater to the daily needs of the villagers, but would at the same time become centres of training local people in accounting and

[3] power of the people

These three resounding Sanskrit phrases illustrate the rigid forms of thinking which it is Sarvodaya's tendency to use as a working basis . . (Ed.)

**mandi* a periodical market-place, usually with more temporary stalls than permanent shops.

organization. What is more, they might as well become an agency for initiating the primitive (barter) economy of the region into the general money economy.

In the absence of regular guidance and essential checks, these shops partially failed to fulfil their purpose. There were cases of misappropriation of funds by the traditional leaders of the village; and, especially when any local workers were involved in these irregularities, the enthusiasm and confidence of the people sagged.

(*c*) Induced by a temptation to cover as wide an area as possible, which was accompanied by an unseemly haste to accomplish things, the Sarva Seva Sangh made the fundamental error of confusing local workers with local leadership. Being influenced by an intimate contact with workers from outside, who more often than not betrayed a middle-class mentality as far as doing labour in the fields was concerned, and moreover, being paid regular salaries which lifted them markedly above the general standard of living in the villages, these local workers began showing attitudes such that they came to be looked down upon as local agents of an outside body. Thus these local workers became the first casualty of an unimaginative Rural Development.

The initial inexperience of the workers at Limbaguda made them to cling to each and every concept that was introduced from outside.

Some Errors in ABSSS Assumptions:

It was, for example, thought in the beginning that the people in an area of deficit economy are entitled to receive through grants-in-aid as many necessities of life as possible.

It was further believed that, once the developmental activities start importing actual benefits, the people will be easily persuaded to agree to the more equitable redistribution of the means of production such as land and cattle.

The former concept led to an inflow of capital in the form of wages and material, not particularly taking into account the

uses in which this new income was being channelized. These manifestations of easy money had a negative psychological effect on the villagers, making them, in turn, wait for outside help even for jobs which they formerly used to take up jointly on their own.

Again, the assumption that people would willingly agree to an equitable redistribution [of property in general], once they were ensured of better returns from their lands, proved to be much off the mark. Because the local people were more oriented towards a community life [and for that reason alone] it could not be safely said that they would *always* prefer social justice to a better economic prospect.

To the workers at Limbaguda who held these concepts or rather misconceptions the remarkable achievement of Garanda (another development centre run by Sarva Seva Sangh in Kora-put) was both a lesson and a challenge.

Besides other equally significant things, it was proved there that even a deficit economy can pull itself up by its bootstraps, provided the workers assisting in this process possess the right skill and approach. Fairly long experience and wisdom of the rural worker there (in Garanda) had helped him to demonstrate the validity, both from the view of social justice and economic prosperity, of insisting on equitable redistribution of land before taking up any developmental programme.

The balancing influence of Garanda checked, on one hand, the mania of the workers at Limbaguda for a spending programme, and on the other, made them further explore the possibility of moving in the direction of another redistribution.

Second thoughts showed, however, the impracticability of this line of action in the light of local conditions, contaminated by fictions and the mental equipment which the workers possessed.

Now, faced with a dilemma, they searched for an alternative course. If the possibilities of leading the whole community towards a co-operative economy were remote in any one village, why not group together progressive elements in two or three adjacent villages and embark upon some co-operative programme?

If this idea proved attractive enough to the workers, the situation in Limbaguda itself provided the necessary opportunity to try out . . . collective farming . . .

. . . Five families did not own sufficient land; three of them were landless before *Gramdan*. Six more families were induced to join through the offer of transferring their old debts to the new organization. It was decided not to register the society, . . . to work it on an experimental basis. Four purposes were expected to be served by this collective.

(i) To devise means of rational land use and increased production;
(ii) To devise a programme of supervised credit for the economic activities of the eleven member families;
(iii) To study their pattern of employment; and
(iv) To study their pattern of expenditure.

Invaluable as its lessons have been, this experiment has not quite come off, and after a year's unsuccessful trial the workers are now in a mood to give it up.

The whole story of this experiment may well form a subject by itself, but the main causes of its failure could be observed as under:

(*a*) While the members and their families were assured of satisfying their minimum needs all the year round, they could not be induced to put in work commensurate with the benefits they received. On the average, just a hundred and eighty work-days were marked against each family.
(*b*) All the while, the 'landless' felt suspicious about the actual motives of the 'landowners'. This apparently acted as a brake on their zeal, which was subsequently reflected in their work. The 'landowners' could not be prevailed upon to transfer their lands to the name of the collective, since in the circumstances obtaining within their organization, they too, felt insecure about the future.
(*c*) In absence of the proper motivation and experience in

organization, the collective failed to realize any substantial increase in production. In the short run this proved to be the decisive factor against continuing the experiment.

In parallel with these experiments [there has been] a fair degree of continuity [in] the credit operations. As pointed out earlier, one of the main challenges to *Gramdans* had come in form of denial of credit both from official and private Agencies. Even without provocation of this nature, the Sarva Seva Sangh would have been expected to provide for credit in these villages. For it is a truism that any programme of expanding economy cannot be ... sustained without an adequate supply of credit.

Hence, what this challenge did in reality was to give an edge to the credit programme at Limbaguda. But the resources with the Sarva Seva Sangh were necessarily limited for the purpose.

ABSSS Decision to Try Government's Credit System:

In order to provide ... base to their developmental activities, the Sarva Seva Sangh proposed the organization of a *Gramdan* Co-operative Union, an officially sponsored body, to meet the credit needs of villages in *Gramdan* areas. It was assumed that if such an agency is made to come up on the District level, it would be in a position to cut across all the prevalent concepts of credit-worthiness, and hence it could pave the way for a smooth linking of credit with development. The Sarva Seva Sangh, however, failed to persuade the State Government to agree to the formation [of this Union]. Government insisted on *Gramdan* villages not being shown any preference over the rest.

The national climate for *Bhoodan* found its climax in September 1957 at Yelwal,* in the meantime; and its organized expression partly helped to sober down the mood both of the State Government and the *Bhoodan* workers in Koraput.

After much deliberation, the Sarva Seva Sangh decided to give a fair trial to the present arrangement of official credit.

*Yelwal, in Mysore State, has been the site of many experiments in development, and has a large building for meetings.

For the time being, pending the final outcome regarding the legal position of *Gramdani* lands, the co-operative administration has acceded the right of these villages to receive crop loans.

A broad review of the working of the ABSSS own credit operations at Limbaguda has been attempted in the beginning of this note. It should suffice here, therefore, to give an idea of the wider problems involved in working out these operations.

It is a well known fact that the loans given by the co-operative agencies are neither adequate nor timely. In the context of *Gramdans* it has an added pinch. Those who have been newly settled on land are, under the co-operative concept, allowed to receive as a loan only 20% of their [land's] anticipated yield. That too is conditional on a guarantee to be provided by the respective donors of the land.

It has so happened that the condition of these lands would make it imperative to require a sizeable investment [in their improvement] before they could be brought into any economic use. . . . The lands need badly to be bunded, levelled, or even reclaimed. By sticking to an outmoded concept, the co-operative credit societies virtually shut their doors against this important aspect of [land-improvement as a factor in] rural reconstruction.

It has been a constant endeavour of the Sarva Seva Sangh to find a practicable solution to this rather baffling problem of rural credit. The present stage of their thinking may not be entirely free from loopholes, yet, in the light of their experience, they have increasingly come to favour the system of supervised credit. The supervision of credit covering every aspect of economic activity in this area is likely to prove an impossible proposition, but they do not see any reason why this system could not be employed with advantage for activities that are of a long-term duration, and meant to serve productive purposes.

Guided by this thought, the workers at Limbaguda are on the way to chalking out an experimental programme in which they could test the soundness or otherwise of their premises. To them, the credit activity has no meaning if it does not finally lead to a condition where, at least in a selected pocket, no agri-

culturist is prevented from working out his land rationally on the grounds of non-availability of credit or technical assistance. Given all these facilities, whether or not the cultivator will be enthused to put his soul on the land would indeed, constitute the ultimate test of any rural movement.

And to achieve this, that movement will have to speak in the language and through the symbols which the people understand and cherish.

"LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE"

Nagin's paper in Seminar No. 4: a Symposium on "The Changing Village" ... official and non-official rural development programmes, December 1959:

It was the *Bhoodan* and the *Gramdan* movements which, more than anything else, brought the Sarva Seva Sangh face to face with the complexity of rural problems.

In the years between the first *Bhoodan* donation nearly six years ago and today, some useful lessons have been learnt by many of us who have stepped in to study at first hand the problems arising from these gifts of land. If we believe that whatever has been gained through this movement is the result of its underlying human values, we also realize that *Bhoodan*, in terms of a lost opportunity, is the direct outcome of the absence of a scientific approach towards the problems of rural development on the part of the workers in the movement.

URBAN AND RURAL

This lack of a scientific approach is most lamentably demonstrated in our tendency to see rural problems in isolation. We forget, or perhaps we have as yet not learnt, that the condition of our country today makes it impracticable to isolate the interest of rural communities from that of urban populations.

No village can hope to improve its conditions permanently without active outside help, no matter how small or specialized.

In this part of Koraput, known as Boipariguda Police Station Area, our next lesson came with the realization that any privately organized development programme cannot be effective unless it has the sympathetic assistance of the administration. An administration either politically hostile, or characteristically weak and crude, can well set a serious limit to what a private agency can achieve through a development programme, sound as it may be in its conception.

DILEMMA

This problem has occasionally presented us with a dilemma. As social workers, we have felt morally bound to expose any malpractice of the administration concerned, more commonly at the lowest levels. As workers in the field of rural development we have found, at the same time, that harmonious relations with local officers are almost vital to success.

A direct-approach method has helped us to maintain reasonably good relations with the administration. A Sub-Inspector of Police or a Revenue Inspector, if approached directly by a social worker, is more amenable to suggestions regarding his behaviour than if the same suggestions come through his superiors. The traditional distrust with which a social worker looks at the lowest official leads to the latter's resistance and hostility.

Even more crucial has been our experience with the people. From the very beginning, our entire attitude was a reflection of our desire to uplift the downtrodden *adivasis* rather than to help them to develop through their own effort and in their own way. Extension work, such as our introduction of the spinning wheel, was, if not entirely outmoded, totally out of place.

SOCIAL CUSTOMS

It took time for some of us to accept the fact that a social custom which allowed abundant freedom in the mode of marriage,

which did not discourage any naturally effected divorce, which not only permitted but also necessitated the drinking of local wines on festive occasions, could be anything but immoral. Do we even now realize that a pattern of social behaviour in any rural community has its own logic and its own cultural justification, and that it does not stand condemned simply because our notions of social behaviour differ?

This orthodox method of bringing about social change can be described as ill-conceived, and our approach to various forms of institutions prevalent among rural communities frequently is unimaginative. The other day we were discussing how best to promote labour co-operative societies. It is a practice among the *adivasis* of this region to pay equal wages to all hired hands, irrespective of their age or sex. The question naturally arose of the form of wage distribution that we should propose for such a society. Should it be on the basis of the output of each individual member? Would that not disturb their ingenuous form of co-operation? Could it not be so arranged that, while the total payment was related to the quantum of earth-work (a form of employment which the local *adivasis* find most suitable at their present level of skill), or any other operation, the internal distribution of wages was left to the members concerned?

Some of our colleagues thought that this might help to retain rather than to rectify unfair practices. But, then, should a rural worker try to undo what he considers to be wrong, if indeed it is wrong, without giving the people concerned a chance to realize it through their own experience? Many such related problems came up in the discussion that followed, and in the end we felt the need to consult the people themselves on these issues.

No less important is the study of the problems of rural development in relation to the general attitude of field-workers. In *Gramdan* villages it is not possible today to obtain scientific data of the work accomplished or unsuccessfully attempted. For all its shortcomings, it can be said to the credit of the National Extension Service that it has succeeded largely in creating a reporting mechanism.

The precious and widely acquired experience of *Bhoodan* workers has been of little value to others, due to the lack of systematic communication. This has resulted in incoherent and, sometimes, contradictory approaches to similar problems facing workers in different parts of the country. This can be ascribed partly to the individualistic tendency of the workers, and partly to the lack of proper appreciation of present day rural problems. It is hardly possible to achieve anything substantial in the field of rural development unless we create a suitable organizational structure and learn to work in a team. To be effective we shall need all the scientific tools at our command, together with a human approach to the problems.

JANASHAKTI

There is a section amongst us which honestly believes that as a non-official agency, our role is to help develop the *Janashakti* which will itself become the driving force in solving the problems of the people. It maintains that unless we apply our attention solely to this, there is real danger of losing the essence of our non-official character. This view undoubtedly provides a corrective to some of our over-zealous plans for development, but it is difficult to see how a people's initiative can be created in a vacuum, much less that it can be extended.

Whatever claims a private agency may make, its approach must reflect finally a combination of both an official and a non-official role. Laying down the minimum in each field of activity, according to the willingness and capacity of the people, and also trying to go a little beyond, by fixing reasonable targets with the help of its workers, demonstrates the possible directions of change.

EDUCATED YOUTH

This in turn brings us to a problem most vital but, in practice, least attended to even by some of the leaders of the *Bhoodan* movement. It is yet not common to find educated youth gladly accepting a career of work in rural areas. A large section of those

who at present are engaged in rural development consist of either the National Extension staff-members, who perhaps had no other choice of work, and those young men and women who, in recent years, have been inspired by *Bhoodan* and *Gramdan*. The latter, though in some cases skilled and educated, are none the less "freshers" in rural work. They need proper guidance and sympathetic understanding before they can be made a permanent feature of the rural scene.

So far, little attention is paid to their training. There is no systematic supervision of their work. Instead, they have been left bewildered, with the all-round confusion of issues for which many a *Bhoodan* leader is responsible. If quality of work is of supreme importance, we must have an imaginative and patient approach to individual workers. The work of rural regeneration is going to be our major task for many a year to come.

Those of us who have been privileged to work in the field, do appreciate the fact that it may require decades of hard work to attain the ends we seek. It is in the fitness of things that we plan our efforts properly so that we may ever remain inspired and hopeful.

Note written jointly by Nagin and his colleagues in the Boipariguda Pilot Project, for the Dhebar Commission on Tribal People dated 7th February 1961:

SOME THOUGHTS ON DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRIBAL AREAS

All developmental activities in the tribal areas must take into account not only the external economic conditions but also the basic mood of the people and their social environment. It is obvious that each of these factors influences the others. Generally speaking, tribal life today is marked by its enforced isolation

and a widespread exploitation. This isolation, again, is caused partly by the fear and distrust created in the minds of the tribesfolk for any outsider, and partly by the relatively difficult terrain which they inhabit. Exploitation, on the other hand, is a result of their undeveloped economy and the failure of the Government or rather of society itself to provide any suitable services and safeguards for tribal interests.

Two schools of thought argue from different starting points about the development of tribal people. One school holds that any prevalent exploitation must be ended before a development programme in terms of "targets" can have a meaning for tribal people.

The other school maintains, with equal strength, that it is only through a programme of development with positive objectives that the intensity of exploitation can be minimized.

Though not devoid of some validity, the argument on either side, to our minds, fails to take into consideration the totality of the present picture. If it is right to say that, without an end to exploitation, much of the developmental activity is bound to miss its point and even to fortify the forces of exploitation, the question naturally arises as to by which means are we then to end this exploitation? Even a well-meant legislation has met with failure in face of the complex rules of law, the absence of any alternative institutional agency to satisfy the needs of tribal people; and, even more disturbingly, the unwillingness of a majority of the law-makers themselves to comply with the spirit of the legislation when it comes to their own individual cases.

This last factor has, indeed, conditioned the hope of anything revolutionary coming forth from our policy-makers. In this sort of political atmosphere, charged with hypocrisy, development programmes meant for tribal people have, undoubtedly, lost their direction; and so, often, their purpose.

The various non-official agencies presently working for tribal welfare, although enthused with vague revolutionary ideas, are, normally speaking, poorly equipped to fulfil their mission. How

often do they approach the problems with their preconceived notions, inadequate intellectual resources and outmoded techniques of social work?

A proper conception of tribal welfare is not possible unless we consider tribal life as a whole, forming part of a particular kind of environment. By every change in that environment, a disturbance is created in the sensitive tribal mind, and its response is either to open up or shrink back into a defensive position, resting upon the nature of that change.

Any ill-conceived transformation of the tribal environment will tend to detribalize the people, exposing them to hitherto unknown forms of exploitation. On the other hand, the introduction of an imaginative change could not only strengthen but would also help to enrich the tribal culture.

A criterion most suitable, or perhaps the only possible humane criterion which should be applicable to test any development programme for tribal people, is to ask in what manner it helps to end their exploitation and how far it goes to strengthen their confidence in their own way of life.

Any orientation for tribal welfare given to officials as well as social workers will have to stress this fundamental principle. But this, too, can have only a limited result unless our policy with regard to our tribal people is forthright and our efforts to implement the policy are sincere. To achieve this, as one of our distinguished leaders has put it, not merely a degree of co-ordination but an active co-operation will be found necessary between all the agencies, both official and non-official, which would then have made common purpose to fulfil a historic necessity.